NEW

MEDICI

DISCOVER THE SECRETS, SCHEMES AND SCANDALS OF EUROPE'S MOST AMBITIOUS RULING FAMILY

HOW A BANKING EMPIRE WAS BUILT AND SQUANDERED

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

FLORENCE: HOME OF THE MEDICI

GODFATHERS OF THE RENAISSANCE

DEMISE OF A DYNASTY

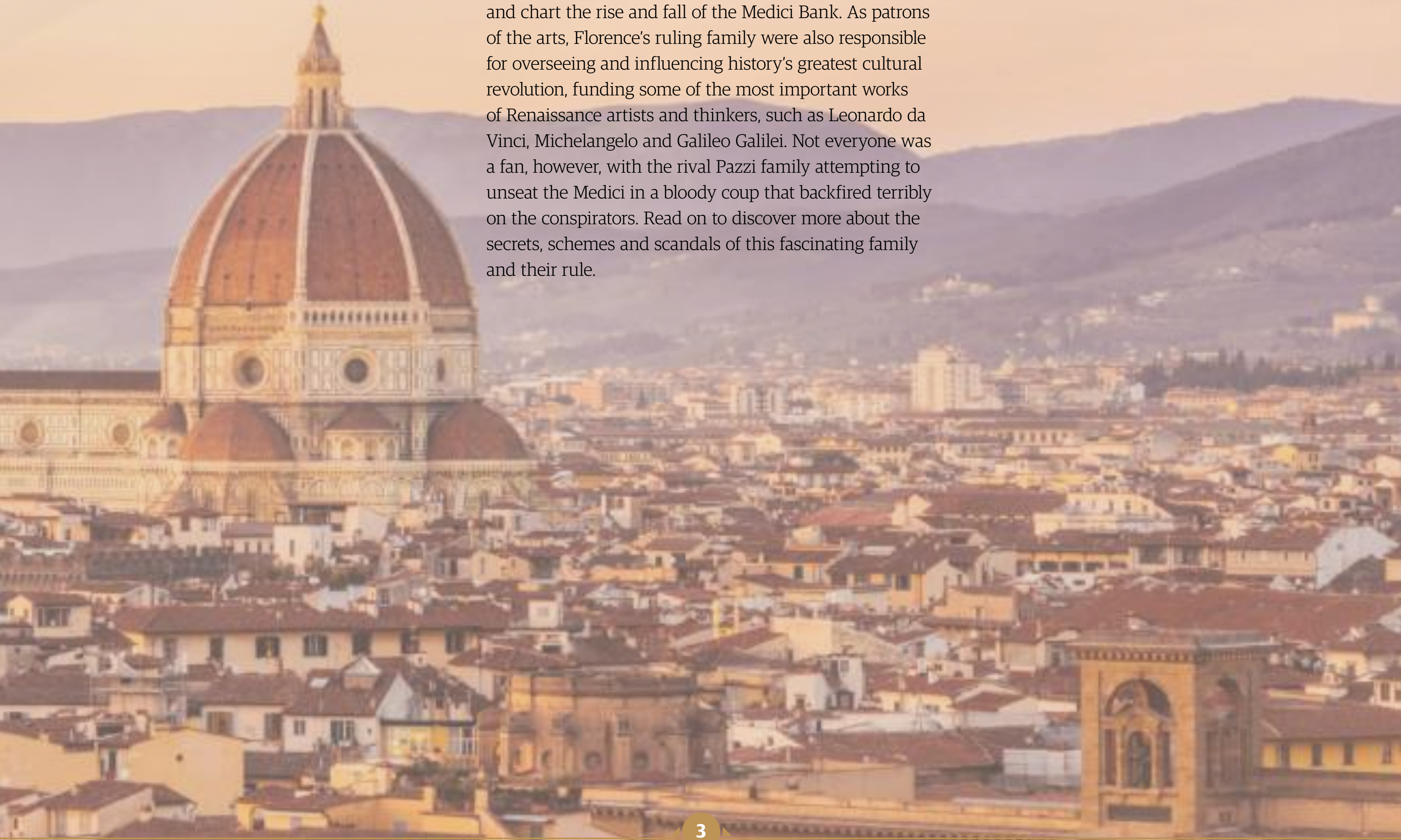
Digital Edition

FUTURE

THIRD EDITION

WELCOME TO MEDICI

From bankers and money-lenders to grand dukes, popes and queens, the Medici rose to become one of the most powerful and influential ruling families in Italy and Europe. Over the following pages we explore the fascinating story of their rule, from their rise to power under Cosimo de' Medici to their decline and demise over 300 years later at the hands of Gian Gastone. We take a trip back to Florence, the playground of the dynasty, to discover what life was like during their rule and chart the rise and fall of the Medici Bank. As patrons of the arts, Florence's ruling family were also responsible for overseeing and influencing history's greatest cultural revolution, funding some of the most important works of Renaissance artists and thinkers, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Galileo Galilei. Not everyone was a fan, however, with the rival Pazzi family attempting to unseat the Medici in a bloody coup that backfired terribly on the conspirators. Read on to discover more about the secrets, schemes and scandals of this fascinating family and their rule.



FUTURE

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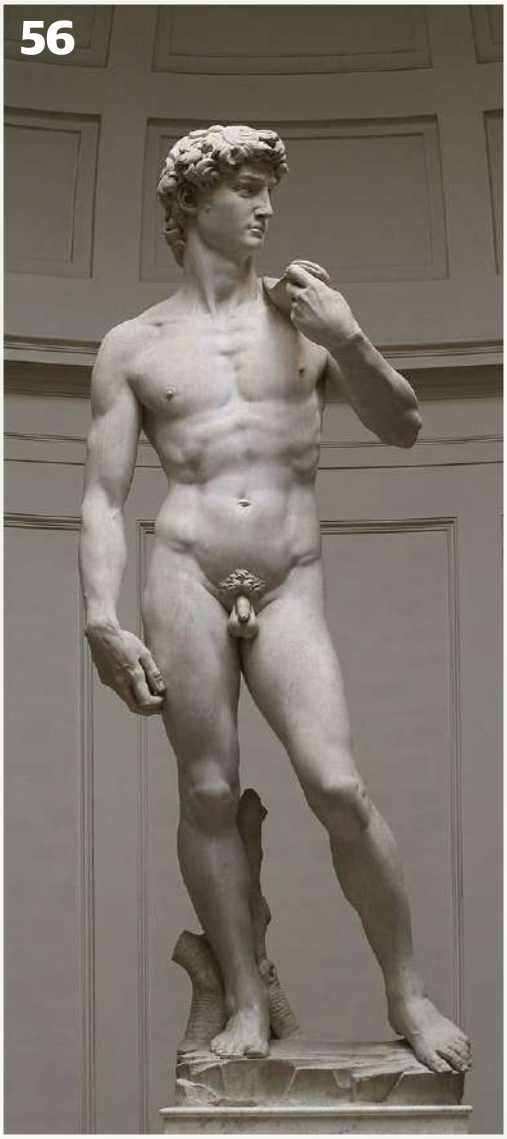
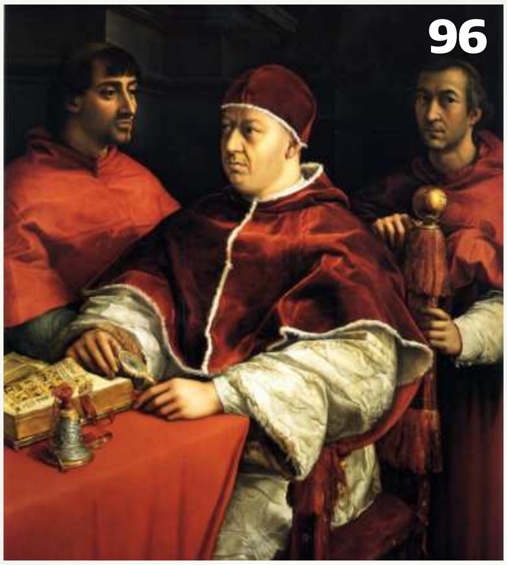
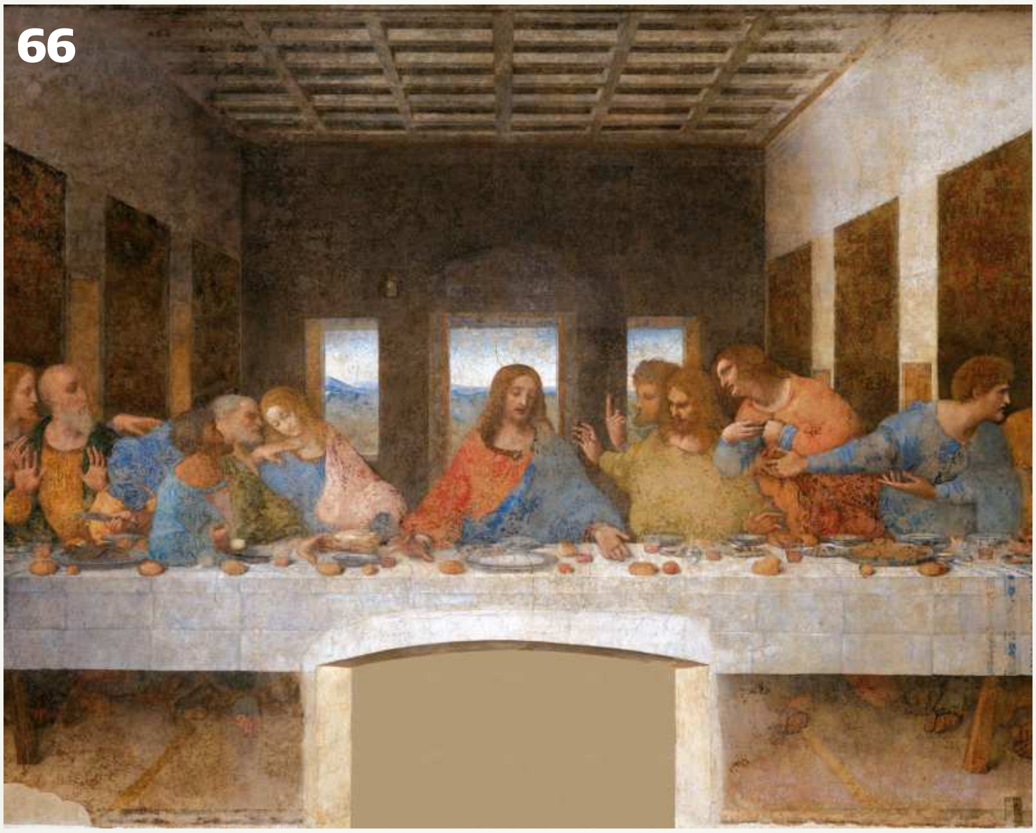
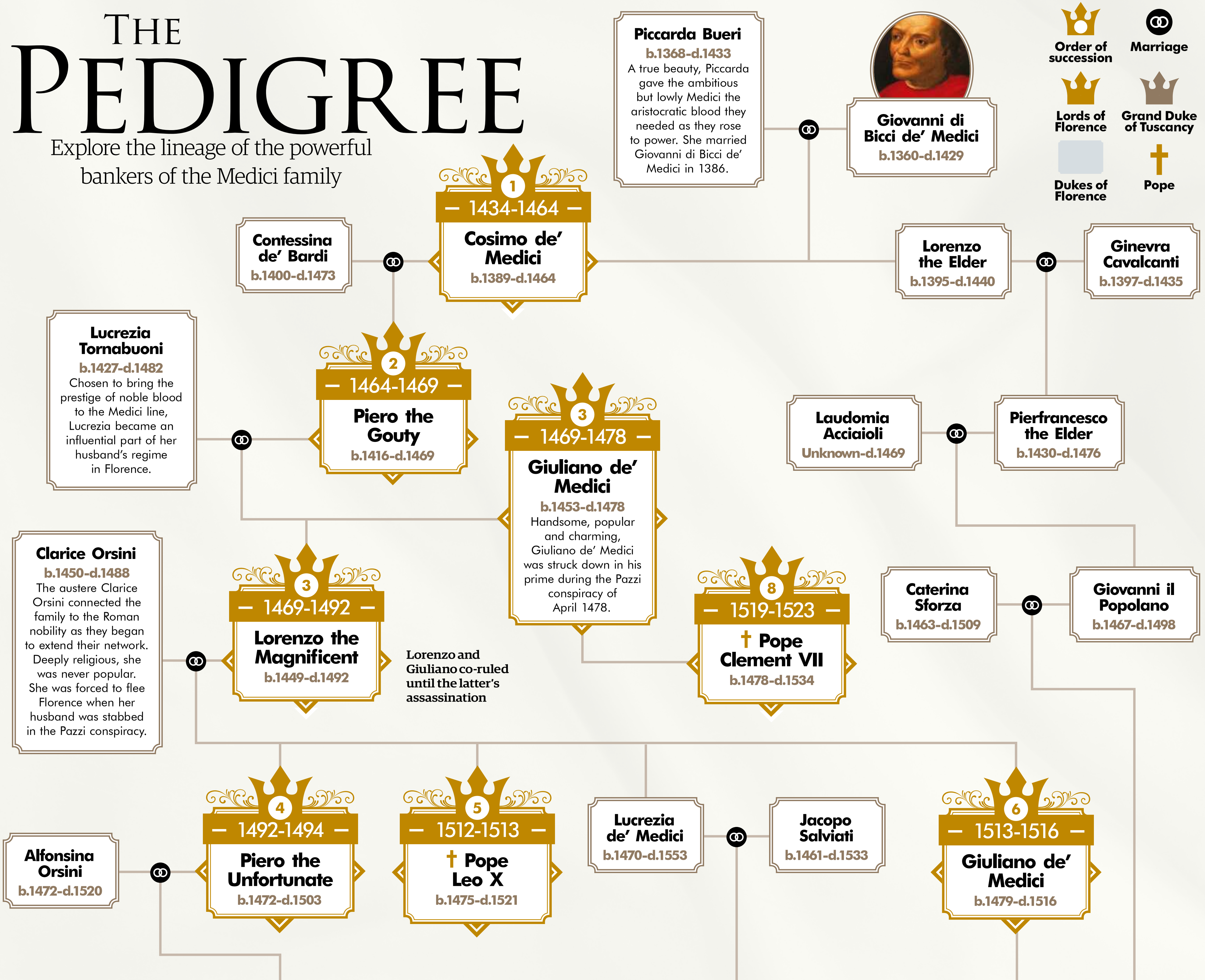






THE PEDIGREE

Explore the lineage of the powerful bankers of the Medici family



Order of succession

Marriage

Lords of Florence

Grand Duke of Tuscancy

Dukes of Florence

Pope

Piccarda Bueri
b.1368-d.1433
A true beauty, Piccarda gave the ambitious but lowly Medici the aristocratic blood they needed as they rose to power. She married Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici in 1386.

Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici
b.1360-d.1429

Contessina de' Bardi
b.1400-d.1473

1
– 1434-1464 –
Cosimo de' Medici
b.1389-d.1464

Lorenzo the Elder
b.1395-d.1440

Ginevra Cavalcanti
b.1397-d.1435

Lucrezia Tornabuoni
b.1427-d.1482
Chosen to bring the prestige of noble blood to the Medici line, Lucrezia became an influential part of her husband's regime in Florence.

2
– 1464-1469 –
Piero the Gouty
b.1416-d.1469

3
– 1469-1478 –
Giuliano de' Medici
b.1453-d.1478
Handsome, popular and charming, Giuliano de' Medici was struck down in his prime during the Pazzi conspiracy of April 1478.

Laudomia Acciaioli
Unknown-d.1469

Pierfrancesco the Elder
b.1430-d.1476

Clarice Orsini
b.1450-d.1488
The austere Clarice Orsini connected the family to the Roman nobility as they began to extend their network. Deeply religious, she was never popular. She was forced to flee Florence when her husband was stabbed in the Pazzi conspiracy.

3
– 1469-1492 –
Lorenzo the Magnificent
b.1449-d.1492

Lorenzo and Giuliano co-ruled until the latter's assassination

8
– 1519-1523 –
✝ Pope Clement VII
b.1478-d.1534

Caterina Sforza
b.1463-d.1509

Giovanni il Popolano
b.1467-d.1498

Alfonsina Orsini
b.1472-d.1520

4
– 1492-1494 –
Piero the Unfortunate
b.1472-d.1503

5
– 1512-1513 –
✝ Pope Leo X
b.1475-d.1521

Lucrezia de' Medici
b.1470-d.1553

Jacopo Salviati
b.1461-d.1533

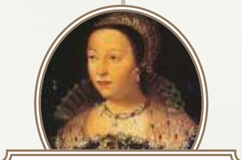
6
– 1513-1516 –
Giuliano de' Medici
b.1479-d.1516

Medici family tree

7
— 1516-1519 —
Lorenzo de' Medici
b.1492-d.1519

⚭

Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne
b.1498-d.1519



Catherine de' Medici
b.1519-d.1589

10
— 1527-1537 —
Alessandro de' Medici
b.1510-d.1537

9
— 1523-1527 —
Ippolito de' Medici
b.1511-d.1535

Maria Salviati
b.1499-d.1543

⚭

Giovanni dalle Bande Nere
b.1498-d.1526

1
— 1537-1574 —
Cosimo I de' Medici
b.1519-d.1574

⚭

Eleanor of Toledo
b.1522-d.1562

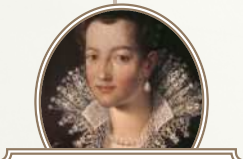
2
— 1574-1587 —
Francesco I de' Medici
b.1541-d.1587
He was suspected of murdering his wife, Joanna, when she died suddenly and he married his mistress, Bianca Cappello.

⚭

Joanna of Austria
b.1547-d.1578

⚭

Bianca Cappello
b.1548-d.1587



Marie de' Medici
b.1575-d.1642

3
— 1587-1609 —
Ferdinando I de' Medici
b.1549-d.1609

⚭

Christina of Lorraine
b.1565-d.1637

4
— 1609-1621 —
Cosimo II de' Medici
b.1590-d.1621

⚭

Maria Maddalena of Austria
b.1589-d.1631

5
— 1621-1670 —
Ferdinando II de' Medici
b.1610-d.1670

⚭

Vittoria della Rovere
b.1622-d.1694

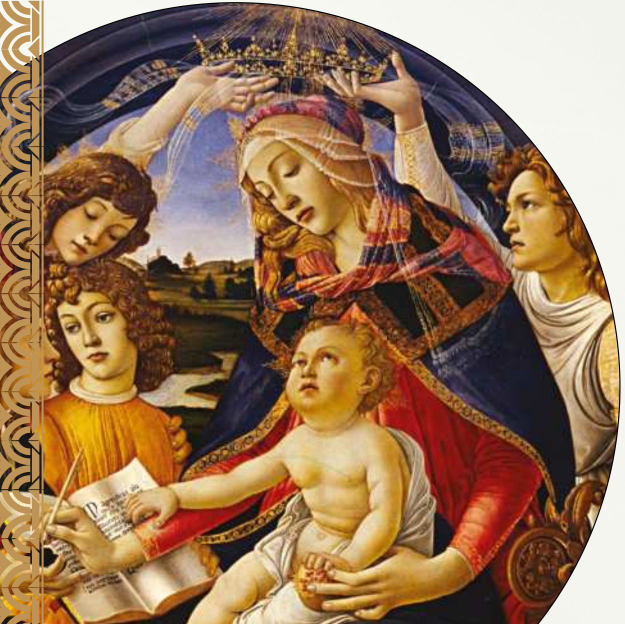
6
— 1670-1723 —
Cosimo III de' Medici
b.1642-d.1723

⚭

Marguerite Louise d'Orleans
b.1645-d.1721

7
— 1723-1737 —
Gian Gastone
b.1671-d.1737

Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici
b.1667-d.1743



Lucrezia Tornabuoni painted by Botticelli as the Madonna, surrounded by her children

THE RISE OF THE MEDICI

How a family of bankers became rich enough to bankroll the Renaissance

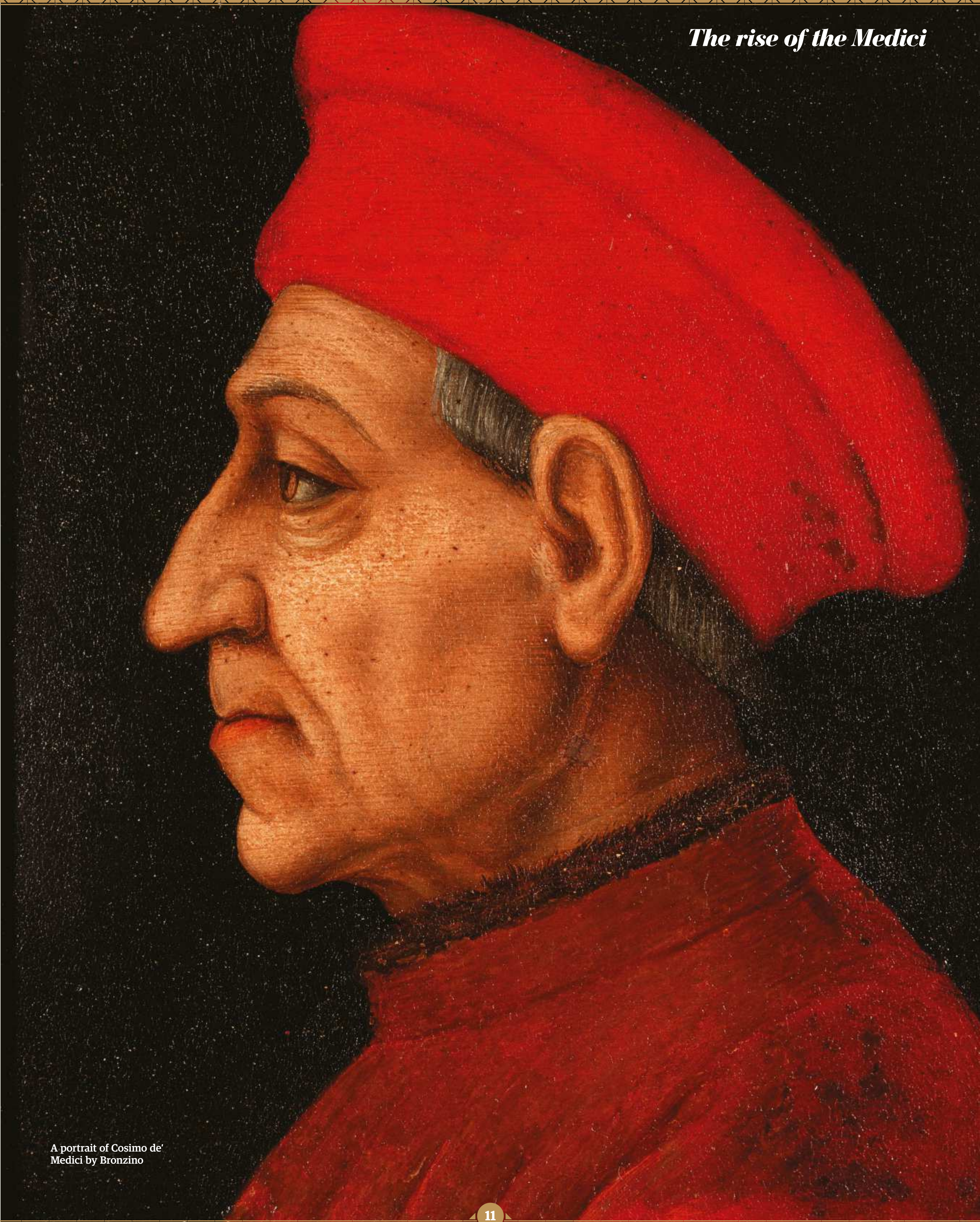
Words **Edoardo Albert**

It was not the sort of accommodation Cosimo de' Medici was used to. The name, alberghettino means 'little inn' but there was nothing cosy about the stone cell with its single window looking down from the Arnolfo Tower of the Palazzo della Signoria (now called the Palazzo Vecchio). The richest man in Europe spent almost a month locked up in the 'little inn', from 7 September to 3 October 1433. But Cosimo was not entirely surprised at the turn of events. And while he looked out over the red-tiled houses of his city, Florence, his agents were working to secure his release from prison before those plotting against him could secure the sentence of death they wanted.

The Medici had not always aroused such fierce enmity. According to the tale later told by the family, they were descended from a knight of Charlemagne named Averardo who, on his way to Rome, had heard tell of a giant in the Mugello, north of Florence, who was despoiling the local peasants. Averardo did what all Charlemagne's paladins would have done in such a situation: he gave battle to the giant. The struggle was savage, the giant striking five deep dents into Averardo's shield, but in the end the brave knight defeated it. To honour his victory, Charlemagne granted Averardo a coat of arms featuring five red balls (palle) on a field of gold. That, at least, was the tale the family liked to tell. Given that the family name, Medici, is the plural of medico ('doctor'), the more likely explanation is that their ancestors were originally doctors and the palle represent either pills or cupping glasses.

Quite how long the Medici had lived in Florence is impossible to say, but by 1296 they had gained sufficient status for Ardingo de' Medici to be elected Gonfaloniere. As if in reaction against the centralisation of the Roman Empire, the Italy of the Middle Ages had become a territory of fiercely competitive city-states, each with their own system of government. There was the Venetian Republic, which combined the rule of the doge with a council composed of members of the leading families; there was the ducal state of Milan, firmly under the control of the Visconti family; there were other rival republics such as Siena and Genoa, with their own versions of a republic; and there were the Papal States, busy experimenting with chaos. The Italian peninsula was a crucible for competing systems of government, a competition fuelled by the extraordinarily high levels of literacy and numeracy among the population. Already by the 13th century, more than one-third of men could read Italian, as well as many women. Since so many of these states depended on various forms of mercantilism to finance themselves, numeracy was also more advanced in Italy than anywhere else.

As for Florence, its natives were intensely proud of their republic and its unique system of government that, for the Florentines, guaranteed their cherished freedoms. The city was ruled by



A portrait of Cosimo de' Medici by Bronzino representatives of its guilds, the associations set up to safeguard the standards and protect the interests of the city's professions and traders. There were seven major guilds and 14 minor ones, of which the most prestigious were the lawyers, the wool merchants, the silk merchants and the cloth merchants. However, the guild of bankers, fuelled by the huge amounts of money they were beginning to make, was increasing in importance. The minor guilds represented tradesmen from tanners to stonemasons. However, three-quarters of the population of Florence had no representation in the city's government.

With any guild member over the age of 30 eligible to take part in the city's government, the Florentines had developed a system whereby the names of all members were kept in eight leather bags, called borse, which were sequestered in the sacristy of the Basilica of Santa Croce. From these bags, nine names were drawn every two months in a ceremony that was open to any citizen to watch. So long as the names drawn didn't belong to men who were in debt, who had had their names drawn out recently, or were related to someone else whose name had already been picked, then they were in the government.

However, the term of office was much shorter than for present-day politicians. These nine men, called the Priori, served for two months, and the government they formed was called the Signoria. Following their election, they immediately left their homes and moved into the Palazzo della Signoria ('Palace of the Signoria') for their term of office. As members of the Signoria, the Priori were paid a salary for expenses, as well as having servants to look after them, liveried in green, as well as a buffone ('buffoon') to provide stories and songs during their meals. While serving, they wore ermine-lined crimson cloaks. From the nine Priori, one was selected to serve as Gonfaloniere, the standard bearer of the republic and keeper of the city's standard.

The Medici loved their city, Florence, above everything else, possibly even more than family

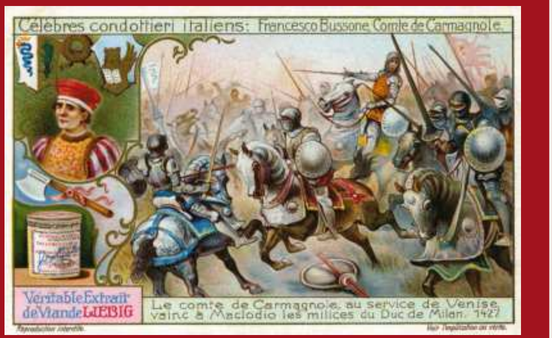
CONDOTTIERI: SOLDIERS FOR HIRE

For two centuries, companies of hired mercenaries fought for the highest bidder in Italy's endless wars

The city-states of northern Italy were faced with a problem: they had grown rich from trade, but they didn't have the resources or manpower to retain standing armies large enough to fight the almost constant skirmishes and wars that plagued Italy from the mid 14th to 16th centuries. So they put their money to work and bought soldiers.

The mercenary captain negotiated a deal on behalf of him and his men, signing a condotta ('contract') with the city-state they agreed to fight for. So the mercenary captain became a condottiere, a contractor, and his men condottieri. Foreigners led and manned the first of these companies, an Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, being the most famous of the captains of these 'free companies', but by the end of the 14th century Italians were raising and manning mercenary forces themselves.

Since the condottieri fought for profit, the captains studied military science in an effort to reduce the risks of combat, generally preferring to avoid pitched battles while reducing the ability of the enemy to continue fighting through attrition, sieges and skirmishes. As professional fighters, when battles between rival forces of condottieri did take place, they were often almost bloodless affairs, although conducted in such a way as to convince their respective employers that brutal fighting was taking place. Condottieri also became notorious for withdrawing from battle or switching sides when the enemy offered to pay them more money.


Célèbres condottieri italiens: Francesco Bussone Comte de Carmagnole.
Véritable Extrait de Viande LIEBIG
Le comte de Carmagnole, au service de Venise, vainc à Maclodio les milices du Duc de Milan. 1427

Condottieri were almost always heavy armoured cavalry, as shown in this illustration of the army of Francesco Bussone

A statue of Brunelleschi looking up in wonder at the dome he had created

PHILIPPVM·BRVNELLESCHI FILIVM

The statue of Cosimo de' Medici as Pater Patriae in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence

COSIMO PATER PATRIAE

> "HIS SECOND TERM BECAME IRRETRIEVABLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORST RIOTS"

The Signoria was aided in its deliberations and decisions by two elected councils, the Dodici Buonomini and the Sedici Gonfalonieri, composed of 12 and 16 men respectively. Should a crisis threaten the republic, the Signoria would have the great bell of their palace rung. The bell, which hangs in the slightly off-centre campanile (it's off-centre because the campanile was built before the palace and incorporated into its structure), has a low note that Florentines likened to the lowing of a cow, thus christening the bell itself La Vacca ('the cow'). Hearing the lowing of the cow, citizens would gather in their quarters and then march to the piazza in front of the palace to hold a Parlamento. Two-thirds of the city's population were required for a quorum. A quorate Parlamento normally decided to nominate an emergency committee, a Balìa, to deal with the crisis.

So to have had a family member selected as Gonfaloniere as long ago as 1296 showed that the Medici family were already near the highest reaches of Florentine status. Another Medici became Gonfaloniere in 1299 and a third in 1314, but after that, the family's rapid rise stalled badly. By the mid 14th century, the family was reduced to owning a few houses in Florence and various dilapidated properties in the Florentine hinterland. However, in 1370 Salvestro de' Medici was elected Gonfaloniere, following that up with a second term in 1378. But his second term became irretrievably associated with the worst riots in Florentine history when the ciompi, wool workers of the lowest class, rose up in protest against their starvation wages, ransacking the houses of the rich merchant guilds and demanding the right to form a guild of their own that would represent them in the city's government. The Signoria granted the ciompi their guild, but their triumph withered away in the face of the jealousy of other workers and the opposition of the city's elite. But Salvestro, Gonfaloniere through these turbulent times, was sympathetic to the ciompi's cause, rendering him and the Medici suspicious to the city's mercantile elite.

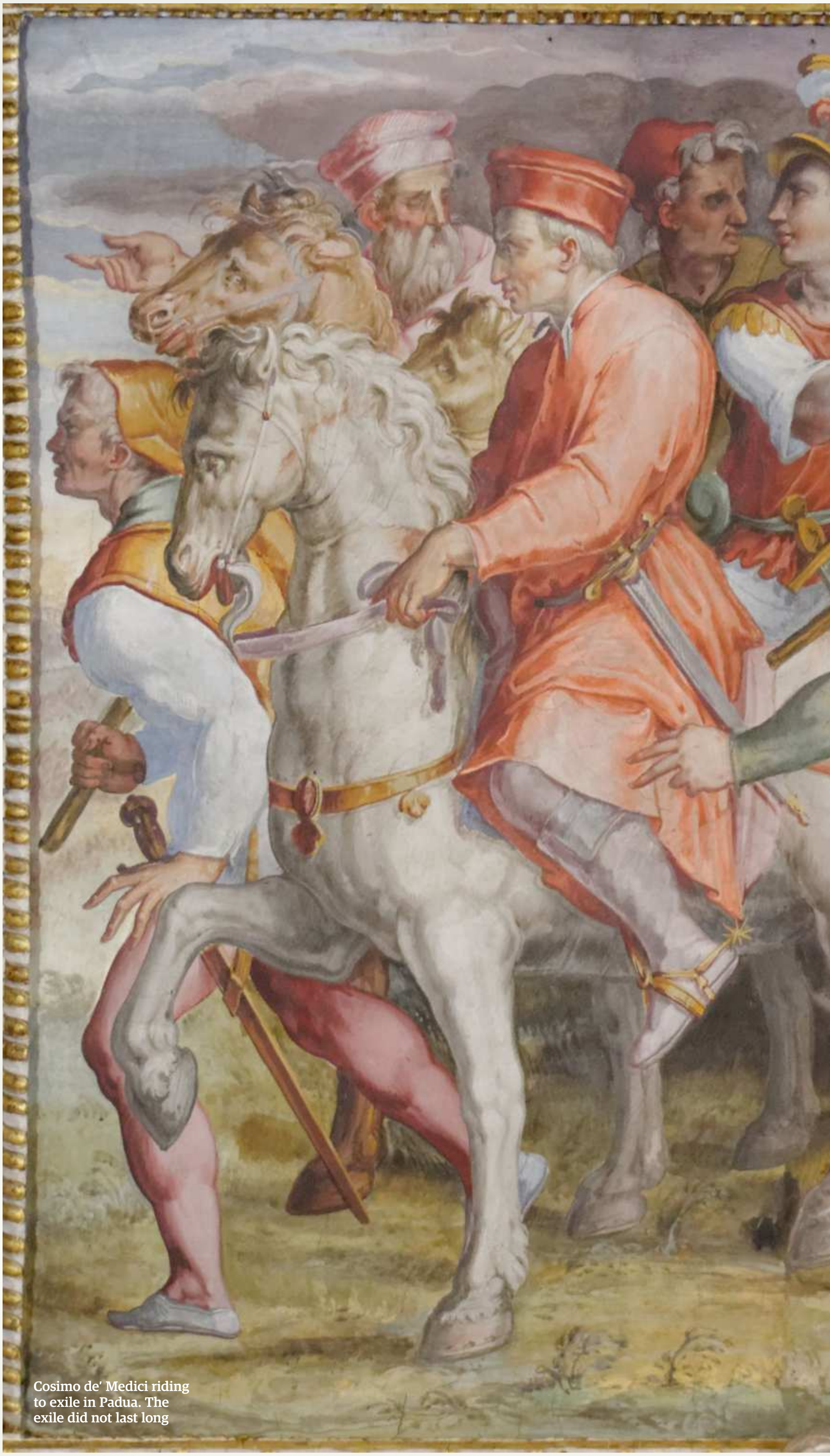
This was a suspicion that Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, the father of Cosimo, spent his long career soothing. Although the reputation for being the champion of the minuto popolo (the 'little people') proved useful in cultivating popularity among the poorer classes in Florence, Giovanni made sure to do nothing to raise the suspicions of the families with power. He had had to work hard to restore the family's fortune, since his own father's estate had been divided between six heirs, and he was not about to jeopardise that by becoming embroiled in the city's politics. It was Giovanni who established the early Medici practice of not flaunting their wealth (a practice that fell into abeyance after Cosimo's death), living in a relatively plain house in the Piazza del Duomo.

Despite his preference for staying out of politics, Giovanni also knew well that for a merchant to prosper, he had to be seen to participate in the city's government. So he served as one of the Priori of the Signoria in 1402, 1408 and 1411, and as Gonfaloniere in 1421. However, even while serving in the Signoria, he took great care not to antagonise the Albizzi family. Rinaldo degli Albizzi had expanded the power of the republic greatly – under the direction of the family, Florence's territory had expanded to include Arezzo and, most profitably, Pisa and its port, as well as Livorno, another coastal town with an excellent harbour. For a mercantile city, particularly one that had founded its wealth on wool and cloth imported from England and the Low Countries, the acquisition of two ports was hugely advantageous.

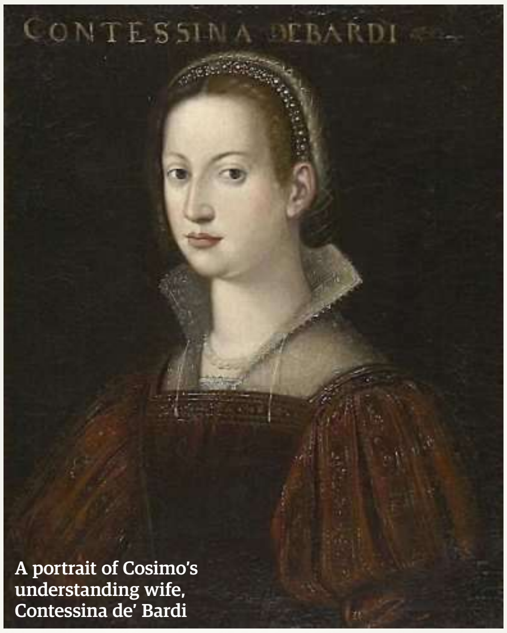
However, this expansion came at a price: the ferocious suppression of domestic opposition, with rival families being exiled, impoverished and even executed. In response, Giovanni worked hard to remain as inconspicuous as possible, deliberately shunning the public eye while he amassed a fortune. For by the 1420s, the Medici were running the most profitable business in the whole of Europe. It was a fortune based on gold and a most unlikely friendship.

Giovanni was a member of two Florentine guilds: Arte della Lana, the wool guild, and Arte del Cambio, the guild of money changers. The latter had become bankers, the change effectively signalled by the issuing, in 1252, of the fiorino d'oro, a gold coin that became known as the florence and the florin. The fiorino d'oro became the common currency of trade throughout Europe, so much so that by 1422 there were two million in circulation. Among the Florentine bankers who rode the tide of florins washing over Europe to immense wealth was Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, but what set him apart from the many other Florentine bankers – there were 72 around the Mercato Vecchio – was his friendship with Baldassare Cossa.

Cossa was the son of an eminent Neapolitan family whose adventurous life had included a stint as a pirate before he entered the Church. At the time, the papacy was at a low ebb, ripped apart by the Western Schism that saw two men both claiming to be pope, one based in Avignon, the other in Rome. To heal this division, a council was held in Pisa in 1409 that deposed both existing pontiffs and elected Alexander V as the new one. Unfortunately, the two previous rival popes both refused to stand down, so there were now three rather than two. Then Alexander V died, and Cossa



Cosimo de' Medici riding to exile in Padua. The exile did not last long



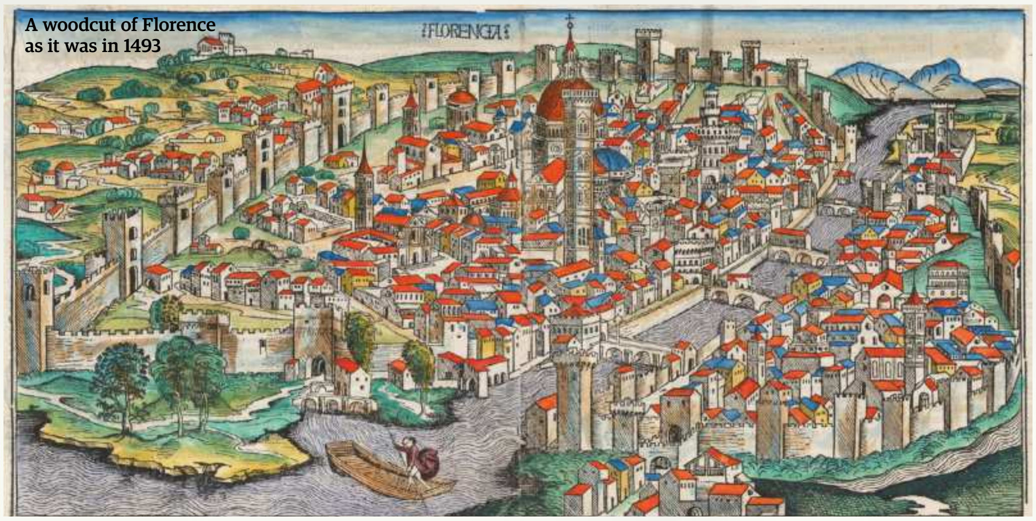
A portrait of Cosimo's understanding wife, Contessina de' Bardi

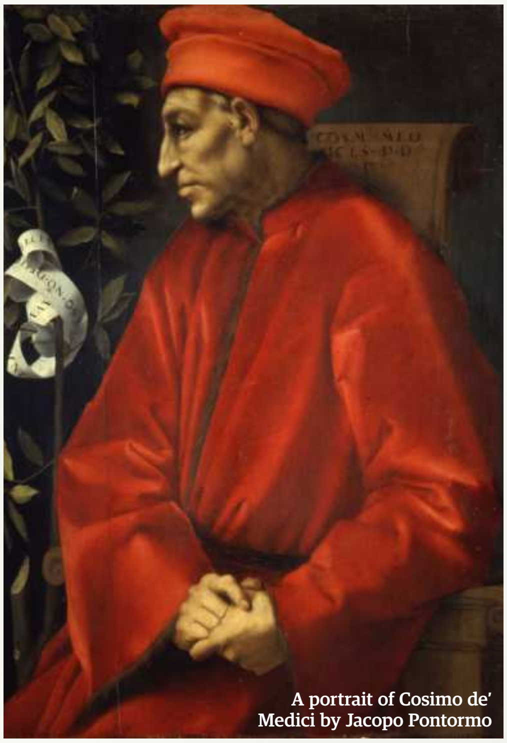
was elected as his replacement, taking the name John – the 23rd of that name.

Pope John had already made use of the services of the Medici – it was rumoured that they had provided him with the 10,000 ducats that he had used to buy his cardinal's hat. As a cardinal in Bologna, Cossa had been a frequent correspondent of Giovanni de' Medici. Now installed as pope, John made the Medici the papal bankers, to their immense profit. However, these profits took a hit when a further attempt to pare three rival pontiffs down to one, the Council of Constance in 1414, ended with John himself deposed, not to mention being accused of an extraordinary variety of crimes. As the historian Edward Gibbon remarked drily, "The more scandalous charges were suppressed; the vicar of Christ was accused only of piracy, rape, sodomy, murder and incest."

However, the charges were largely rhetorical, the legal expression of John being told by the power brokers of Europe to go and not to make a fuss about it. Having been held a prisoner for three years, the Medici paid his ransom, 38,500 Rhenish gulden, and Cossa lived out the few months remaining to him in Florence.

The Council of Constance had ended the schism by accepting the resignation of one pope and deposing the other two. It then elected Otto Colonna, who was from an old Roman family to the chair of Saint Peter, and he took the name Martin V. On his journey back to Rome from Constance, Martin stopped in Florence for two years. With the pope actually living in his city, Giovanni attempted to form as close a relationship with Martin as he had had with John, but the Medici repayment of their debts to John, which included paying for a tomb designed by Donatello and Michelozzo with the inscription 'Ioannes Quondam Papa XXIII' ('Former pope, John XXIII'), irritated Martin, who made the Spini family, old rivals of the Medici, his personal bankers. However, when the Spini business collapsed, Martin had little choice but


A woodcut of Florence as it was in 1493


A portrait of Cosimo de' Medici by Jacopo Pontormo

The Ponte Vecchio over the Arno in Florence

The fiorino d'oro was the basis of Florentine wealth

to turn to the Medici, who had a branch of their bank conveniently located in Rome. (If you are wondering how there could have been a Pope John XXIII in the 15th century and another Pope John XXIII in the 20th century, it is because Cossa was recorded as one of the antipopes, so when Angelo Roncalli was elected pope on 28 October 1958, taking the name John, he became officially Pope John XXIII.)

One of the key agents in Giovanni's dealings with Pope John was his son, Cosimo. He travelled with John to the ill-fated, at least for John, Council of Constance before then going on to visit the branches of the Medici Bank in Germany, France and Flanders. Cosimo was 25 when he left with John, already married to a fat but rich daughter of the house of Bardi called Contessina. She would prove an undemanding wife, happy to look after the home while Cosimo took care of business, and unfazed by her husband's occasional infidelities while away for extended periods. During his three years in Rome following the eventual arrival of Pope Martin in his city, Cosimo fathered a son, named Carlo, who was brought up alongside the children Cosimo had with Contessina.

By 1420, Giovanni de' Medici had largely withdrawn from the day-to-day running of the family business, entrusting its care to his sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo. As the eldest, Cosimo became the representative of the family and its business, political and artistic interests. He had been given an excellent education during which he had thoroughly imbibed the new humanistic ideals, with their concern for classical ideas and learning, that would form the basis of the Renaissance.

It was this commitment to humanism as much as the great wealth of the family business, that led to Cosimo finding himself in opposition to the Albizzi family and its paterfamilias, Rinaldo. Committed to expanding the power of the republic, Rinaldo had fomented a war with Lucca that went badly wrong for the Florentine forces when the Lucchesi enlisted the support of the Duchy of Milan and its formidable condottiere, Francesco Sforza. However, Rinaldo had had the foresight to enlist Cosimo into the Ten of War that prosecuted the conflict, so the Medici were implicated when it went wrong for the Florentines. Withdrawing from the conduct of a battle that he had supported half-heartedly in the first place, Cosimo left the Ten of War and went to Verona.

This was the chance Rinaldo had been waiting for. In Cosimo's absence, he started to spread rumours and misinformation about the intentions of the Medici, insinuating that Cosimo had gone to Verona to hire condottieri to overthrow the republic. However, the Medici had enough allies among the major families of Florence for Rinaldo to be unable to form an alliance against them. In particular, Florence's elder statesman, Niccolò da Uzzano, had set his face against any intemperate action on the part of the Albizzi.

However, when Niccolò died in 1432, the situation for Cosimo began to deteriorate. The Albizzi ramped up their propaganda against the Medici, declaring that Cosimo was buying influence through donations to religious orders and by paying for the construction of religious houses - houses that always carried the Medici insignia, even marking "the monks' privies with his balls!"

In the face of this torrent of abuse, Cosimo, whose many virtues did not include physical courage, withdrew to his estate in the country. In his absence, Rinaldo ensured that the new Signoria was made up of his supporters, even paying off the debts of one Bernardo Guadagni so that he could serve as Gonfaloniere. It was Guadagni who then summoned Cosimo back to Florence, telling him that there were important decisions that required his attendance.

Attending the Signoria as summoned, Cosimo was instead taken upstairs and locked in the alberghettino, the cell in the campanile underneath La Vacca. On 9 September 1433, two days after his arrest, Cosimo heard the Vacca tolling, summoning the Florentines to a Parlamento, but men posted by Rinaldo ensured that no supporters of the Medici made it into the piazza. From the meagre crowd, Rinaldo recruited a Balìa of 200 men to decide the fate of the prisoner looking down upon the piazza from his prison cell.

However, the assembled Balìa refused to approve the sentence of death that Rinaldo wanted passed on Cosimo. Their reluctance to put the chief of the Medici to death was increased when, word having spread fast, many of the customers of the Medici bank sent messengers and ambassadors to plead his case. Rinaldo, by judicious use of the rack, managed to extract confessions from two Medici supporters stating that Cosimo was planning a revolution with the help of foreign powers, but few believed this.

In the meantime, Cosimo and the Medici had been putting their money to work. Guadagni, the Gonfaloniere whom Rinaldo had bought by paying his debts, was bought again with a relatively measly bribe of a few thousand florins. Pleading illness, Guadagni stood down in favour of another Priore, Mariotto Baldovinetti, whom the Medici had already bribed.

Finally resigning himself to the fact that he would not be able to execute Cosimo as he had originally planned, Rinaldo instead had his prisoner brought before the Signoria on 28 September. The Signoria then sentenced Cosimo to ten years' exile in Padua, his cousin Averardo to ten years in Naples, and his younger brother Lorenzo to Venice for five years. Cosimo was taken, at night, from the city and brought to the republic's frontier, from where he was left to travel on to Padua. From Padua, Cosimo travelled on to Venice, where he joined his brother.

Back in Florence, the supporters of the Medici family were plotting against the Albizzi, but Cosimo stayed clear of these machinations, relying instead on the unpopularity of Rinaldo's war against the Milanese to weaken him and his followers. When the Florentine army finally found itself defeated by Milanese condottieri in 1434, the subsequent elections saw Medici supporters elected to the Signoria. The situation of the Albizzi was becoming untenable, but it seemed that Rinaldo would not go down without a fight.

However, the new pope, Eugene IV, was also present in Florence, having had to flee Rome because of rioting mobs, and in the confrontation between supporters of the Albizzi and the Medici families, he offered himself as mediator. With his support draining away, Rinaldo finally accepted the pontiff's arguments to step aside, while clinging to the hope that Eugene's promise to protect the Albizzi from the vengeance of the returning Medici would be honoured.

So, at the start of October 1434, Cosimo and his brother Lorenzo returned to Florence, with a servant and a mace-bearer accompanying them, arriving after nightfall to ensure that there were no public disturbances. Having thanked the pope for his help, the next day Cosimo appeared at the Palazzo Bardi to the cheers of the crowds of Florentines who had worked and hoped for the return of the Medici to their city. Rinaldo and the Albizzi family were banished, along with their supporters and their relatives, and Florence was now Cosimo's once more. He could do with it what he willed.

> "IT SEEMED THAT RINALDO WOULD NOT GO DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT"

Florence's magnificent Duomo with its Brunelleschi-designed dome

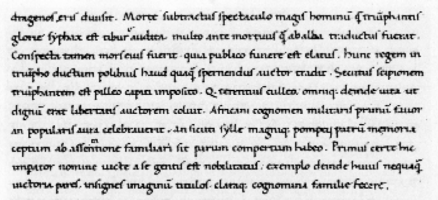
THE HANDWRITING THAT BECAME TYPEWRITING

Cosimo and the origins of Roman type

Among the many exceptional scholars whom Cosimo de' Medici became friends with was Poggio Bracciolini. The son of a poor apothecary from a village near Florence, Poggio had managed to scrape together enough money to enrol at the Studio Fiorentino and was swiftly spotted for his exceptional abilities. A master of Latin and Greek, he entered into the service of the Church, serving seven popes during a long career as papal secretary.

Through his travels, Poggio scoured monastic libraries for old works. Among his many discoveries was the only surviving copy of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. When he couldn't buy the manuscript from the owner, Poggio would copy it in a famously clear and legible hand. Cosimo so admired Poggio's writing that he ordered all his books copied in the same style and the first Italian printers based their Roman font on Poggio's handwriting.

In between studying and his career, Poggio also found time to father 14 children from a variety of mistresses. Then, at the age of 55, he decided to finally get married, choosing an 18-year-old from a rich Florentine family. To the surprise of all his friends, the marriage proved happy and fruitful: they had a further six children. Poggio died, aged 79, a rich man after a remarkably full life.



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The handwriting that became the basis of Roman type: a sample of Poggio Bracciolini's script

© Getty Images

FLORENCE AND THE MEDICI

For more than 300 years the Medici dominated Florence, with the city's fortunes mirroring the family's rapid changes in fortune

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

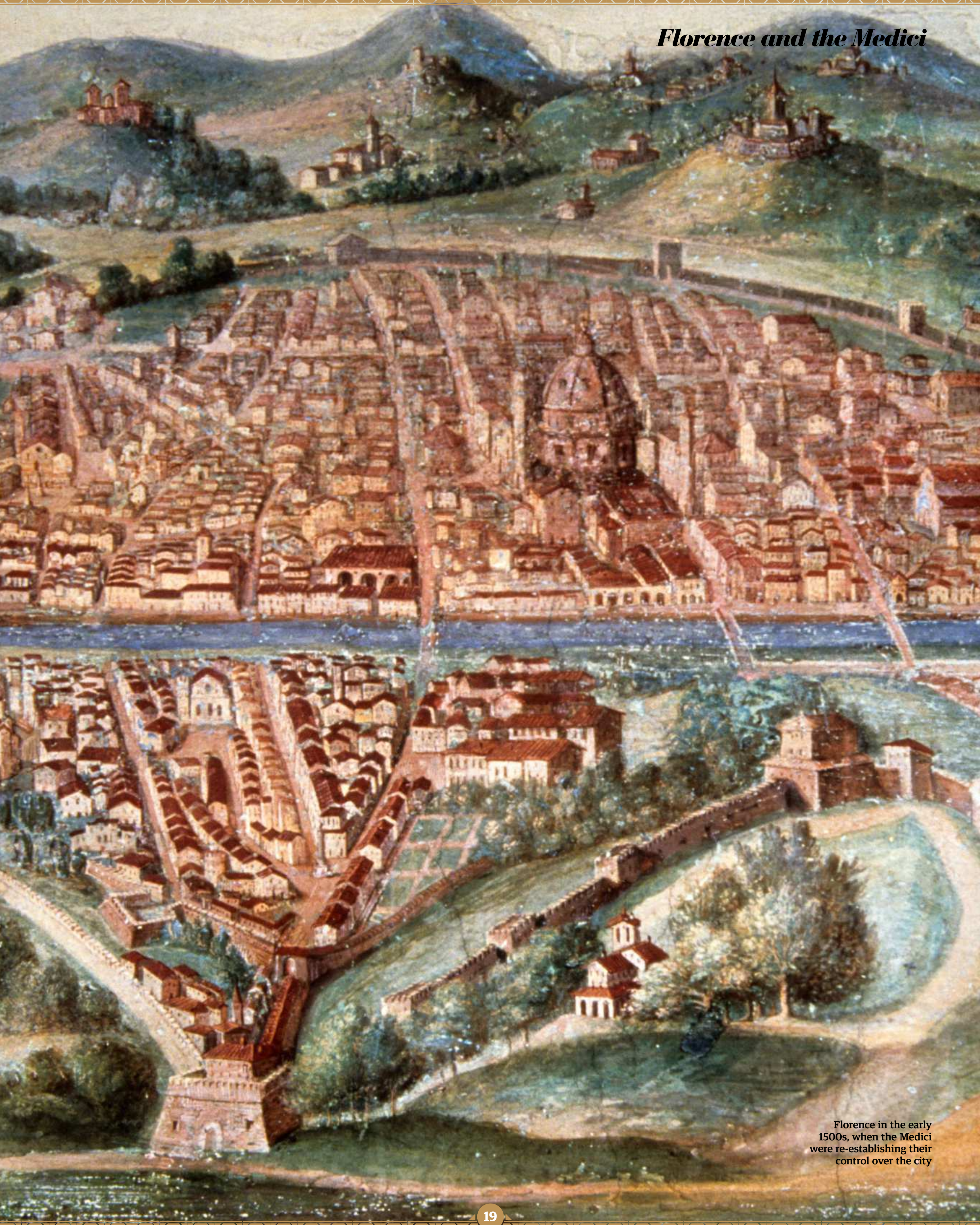
Florence and the Medici were almost synonymous from the 15th century until the early 18th century, with the family dominant in a city that they shaped to reflect their own glory.

Florence, which is around 170 miles from Rome and stands on the banks of the River Arno in northern Italy, was a prospering city long before the Medici. The city itself, which was walled, had a Roman origin, although it was a small settlement in ancient times. Little of Roman Florence now survives, with the population declining dramatically in the period after the fall of the Roman Empire.

The city began to grow in importance in the early Medieval period, with the Margrave of Tuscany moving his seat to Florence in the mid-11th century. Several monasteries had already been founded in the city, with it quickly becoming a major economic and religious centre. Medieval Florence was largely timber, but by the start of the 12th century defensive stone towers, built by the nobility, had begun to characterise the cityscape. These wealthy families were the ruling class of a city whose economy was deeply connected to mercantile trade.

City relations were frequently turbulent, particularly in relation to the rivalry between the Guelph and Ghibelline factions, who respectively supported the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor, with Florence emerging as a leading Guelph city. It was also a cultured city, with the poet Dante Alighieri, who was born in 1265, one of its most famous sons. In Dante's day the city was home to around 45,000 people – enormous for the time.

Florence's growth and prosperity was almost entirely due to trade, with the production of woollen cloth, as well as other luxury goods, its main exports. In the Medieval period, trade networks expanded throughout Italy and into northern Europe, with wealthy merchants also further building their capital by setting up in business as bankers. This led to huge increases in wealth, with much of the papal banking carried out in Florence from the end of the 13th century and with money lending and exchange very profitable.



Florence in the early 1500s, when the Medici were re-establishing their control over the city

Florence's bridges were mostly destroyed by floods in 1333. The Ponte Vecchio was rebuilt in stone, with shops lining both its sides

"ALL PEOPLE IN THE CITY WERE INVOLVED IN PARISH LIFE"

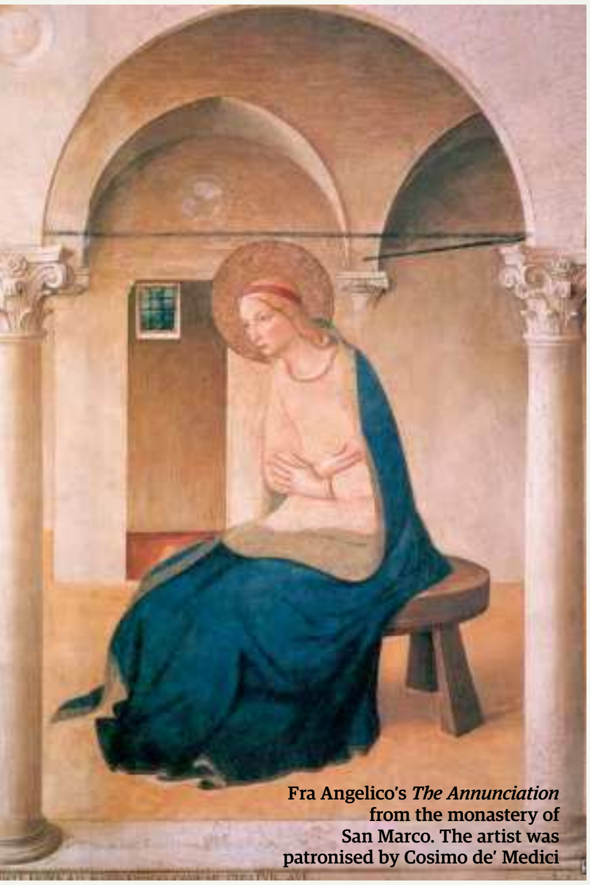
Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici founded the Medici Bank in Florence in 1397, rapidly rising to a position of dominance there. In his time, Florence was an imposing walled city, entered by stout, defensive gates. Within the walls, buildings were crammed close together, with the upper storeys of timber buildings overhanging the street, making them dark and tunnel-like.

Giovanni would have been familiar with many of the fine houses of Florence's elite, often decorated with their coats of arms, while their interior walls were covered with bright frescoes. Crammed more closely together were the houses of poorer citizens, more simply decorated with whitewashed walls and stone floors. Houses tended to be tall and narrow, with extra floors built as a family expanded. The ground floor would usually be used as a shop, with a store behind, or serve as a workshop. The living quarters were above.

The Florence of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici was a diverse place, with many trades and occupations carried out within the city's walls. The disasters of major flooding in 1333 and the Black Death of 1348 had caused the population to fall but, by the early 15th century, the city was booming.

The city's great wealth had made it possible to glorify the church with huge monuments, such as the gothic cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, which is known as the Duomo, which was begun in 1296 and completed 140 years later. The octagonal baptistry beside it is one of the oldest buildings in the city, dating to the 11th century, while the accompanying bell tower was built by Giotto di Bondone in the 14th century. These three buildings were absolutely central to religion in the city and stood out to any visitor. However, there were many other fine religious buildings in Giovanni's time.

Monasticism was of considerable importance in Medieval and early-modern Florence, with the Franciscans building the great church of Santa Croce, the Dominicans Santa Maria Novella, the Carmelites Santa Maria del Carmine and the Servites Santissima Annunziata. All people in the city were involved in parish life, with poorer individuals paying for candles and their wealthier neighbours paying to adorn the churches with their family crests, or with tombs to honour their ancestors. The Medici were no exception, with Giovanni and his son, Cosimo, major donors to the rebuilding of their own parish church, San



Fra Angelico's *The Annunciation* from the monastery of San Marco. The artist was patronised by Cosimo de' Medici

Lorenzo, in which both men were buried. Giovanni also helped pay for the bronze north doors of the Baptistery in 1402, which were produced by Lorenzo Ghiberti and survive today.

Giovanni and his son would also have been familiar with great secular buildings, with the Piazza della Signoria, which was not far from the Duomo, the centre of the city's administration. The buildings here include the Palazzo Vecchio, now serving as the town hall and known as the Palazzo della Signoria. This was built in the 14th century in imposing brown local stone. It was designed as a fortress, complete with ramparts and a tall tower over which the countryside could be viewed. In front, the piazza was used as the city's marketplace, while general assemblies were heard there too, in which citizens were required to vote.

Giovanni's son, Cosimo, lived in the Palazzo Bardi in Via de' Bardi, which he received as part of his wife's dowry. After his father's death, he decided to commission something larger, close to his parish church of San Lorenzo. For the design of his palace, he turned first to the great architect Filippo Brunelleschi, who was already engaged in the rebuilding of San Lorenzo.

When the cautious Cosimo was shown Brunelleschi's designs and wooden model, however, he considered it too grand and ambitious. He was concerned partly about the cost and largely that there was a danger that such a palace would draw adverse attention to the Medici from the older, more established families. In a fury, Brunelleschi smashed his wooden model, with Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi, a

Brunelleschi's dome still dominates Florence's skyline. It was the greatest engineering achievement of its era

BRUNELLESCHI'S MIRACULOUS DOME

Medici Florence was dominated by the cathedral, which was crowned by a dome once believed impossible to build

Work had begun to build a cathedral in Florence in 1294, with construction taking place over the next 140 years. The cathedral's design called for a stunning dome to crown the building, 138 feet in diameter. While the rest of the building was completed by 1418, there were doubts that the dome - which was larger than any similar structure - could be achieved. It was so large that even the wood for the scaffolding would have been impossible to source in the local area.

With Medici aid, Filippo Brunelleschi was able to gain the commission to build the dome. To the authorities' concern, the architect refused to reveal how he intended to construct the dome without even the use of scaffolding. According to one story, Brunelleschi produced an egg and declared that anyone who could make it stand upright would be able to build the dome. When no one could do it, Brunelleschi took the egg and cracked it on the bottom, allowing it to stand upright. When those around him complained they too could have done that, the architect declared that they could also build the dome, if they could see his plans.

In less than two decades Brunelleschi, using lightweight brick instead of stone, did the impossible, crowning the cathedral. On 25 March 1436 the cathedral was finally consecrated in the presence of the pope and, of course, Brunelleschi's Medici patrons.

Florentine, instead commissioned to carry out the design and building work.

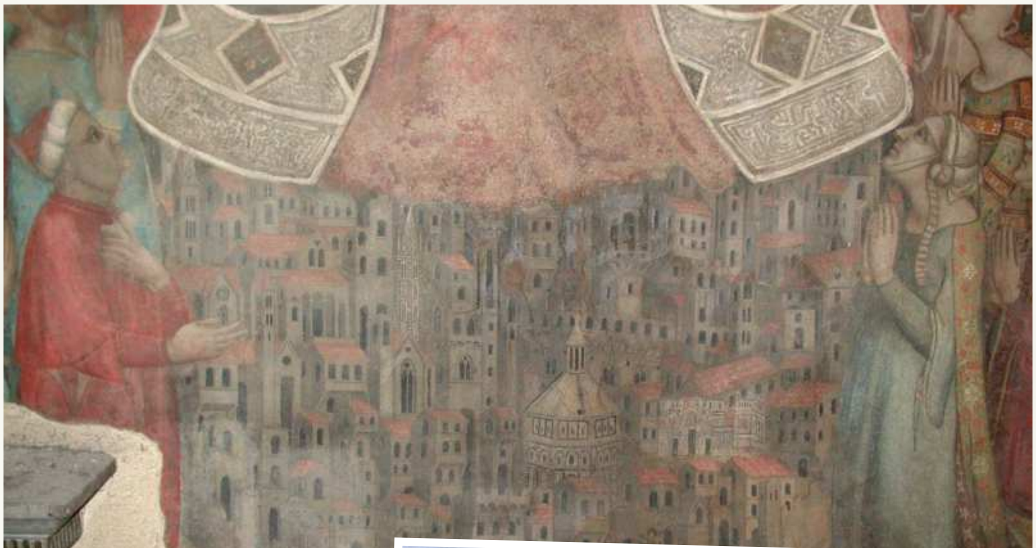
Cosimo was very influential in Florentine politics, although he strove to appear only as a wealthy banker. As a means of protection, he tended to downplay his wealth. He was therefore cautious in the design and building of the Palazzo Medici. The original building was modest in size, but still imposing. The ground floor was built of large, rough-hewn stone, in the style of the day, while this floor was also window-less. Above, however, there were grand arched windows looking down into the piazza below, while the palace was entered through an imposing gateway.

It was also in Cosimo's day that one of the defining features of the city was completed. The Duomo had remained uncompleted since the planned dome - 138 feet in diameter - had proved almost impossible to achieve. The problem was at last solved by Brunelleschi, with his dome still the major landmark of the city. The cathedral was consecrated in 1436, in a magnificent ceremony conducted by the pope himself.

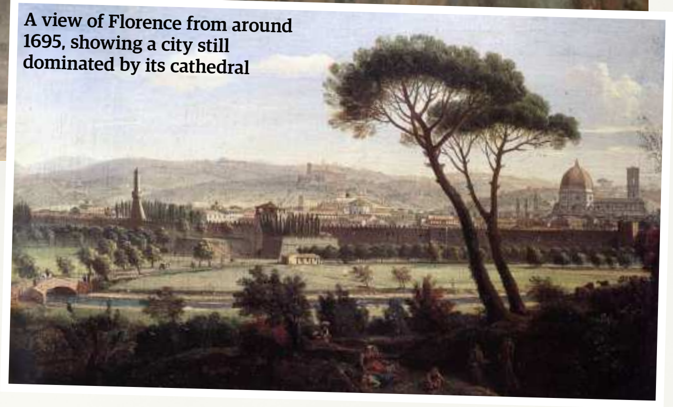
Cosimo, who was the leading figure in the Florentine government, turned his home into the most cultured city in Europe. Donatello was a member of his household, producing his bronze statue, *David*, for the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici, as well as a bronze of Pope John XXIII for the Baptistery and other exquisite works. Filippo Lippi, too, worked in a studio in the Palazzo Medici in the 1430s. Fra Angelico, who produced the famous murals that still adorn the walls of the monasteries of San Domenico di Fiesole and the monastery of San Marco was also patronised by the Medici from the 1440s. Cosimo himself requested that Fra Angelico adorn his cell in San Marco - where Cosimo would visit - with an image of the Adoration of the Magi. By the second half of the 15th century, Florence was renowned as the home of the greatest artists in the world.

Although Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici always claimed to be a private man, he was a prince in all but name, with his regime bringing peace and some political stability to Florence after centuries of feuding between the rivalling great families. With this stability, many of the richest families embarked on building sprees, adding ever grander palaces to the city.

To build a palace, Florence's rich citizens would sometimes clear whole neighbourhoods, with the Palazzo Medici causing the demolition of 20 houses when it was built. There was much ceremony included in building these grand residences, with astrologers engaged to ensure that the building



Florence in the mid-14th century from the Madonna della Misericordia fresco. The Baptistery and unfinished cathedral can be seen



A view of Florence from around 1695, showing a city still dominated by its cathedral

MEDICI FLORENCE: A TIMELINE

Medici rule in Florence spanned over 300 tumultuous years, taking the city from the Medieval period into the Renaissance and beyond

The Medici Bank founded
1397
Florence had long been a major banking centre when Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici opens his own bank in the city. The Medici Bank will soon have branches throughout Europe.

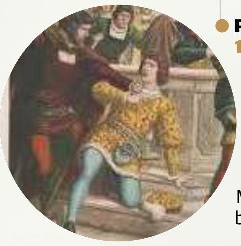
Gonfaloniere
1421
Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici takes a share in the rule of Florence in 1421 when he is appointed as one of the nine Gonfalonieres, who serve as the city's government.

Duomo consecrated
1436
Florence's magnificent cathedral took 140 years to build and was constructed on the site of an earlier, 5th century, cathedral. It is finally consecrated in 1436 by the pope himself.

Council of Ferrara-Florence
1439
Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici persuades the pope to move the Council of Ferrara to Florence in 1439. The council nearly succeeds in uniting the Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches.

Gates of paradise
1452
Having produced the Baptistery's bronze north doors, Lorenzo Ghiberti is commissioned to create the east doors. Completed in 1452, they are so fine that Michelangelo nicknames them the 'gates of paradise'.

Palazzo Pitti
1457
The Palazzo Pitti is started in 1457 by Luca Pitti, a wealthy banker. The original building is massive. It will later be enlarged by the Medici, who purchase it in the 16th century.



Pazzi conspiracy
1478
The Medici make enemies in Florence and further afield. On 26 April 1478 Lorenzo the Magnificent narrowly escapes assassination during Mass in the Duomo. His brother, Giuliano, dies.

Bonfire of the Vanities
1497
The Medici were driven from Florence in 1494 in favour of theocratic government under Girolamo Savonarola. On 7 February 1497 Savonarola orders the burning of art, books and other supposedly sinful objects.

The Medici return
1512
The Medici finally return to Florence in 1512 after nearly 20 years of exile. Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici orchestrates the return, arriving in the city at the head of an army.

would be constructed at a propitious time, and much ceremony, including medals struck to commemorate the foundation stones being laid.

The Medici were far from the only builders, with the Palazzo Strozzi begun in 1489 for Filippo Strozzi. It was dirty, disruptive work, with Luca Landucci, who owned a shop opposite the Strozzi building site, complaining that "all the streets around were filled with heaps of stones and rubbish, and with mules and donkeys carrying away refuse and bringing gravel, making it difficult for anyone to pass along". There would be crowds, too, to watch the progress of the build, blocking the streets and access to neighbouring businesses. The buildings of the wealthy were built of stone in the period, with Florence's first brick-faced building - the Palazzo Grifoni - not constructed until the middle of the 16th century.

The construction boom of the late-15th century changed much of the city, as neighbourhoods gave way to over 100 grand palazzos. Work was carried out, too, on the south side of the Arno, with the ambitious Palazzo Pitti built in the late-15th century by the wealthy Luca Pitti, who had cleared his site of smaller dwellings to build an immense palace over 40-feet high. The palace would be extended still further under Medici ownership in the following century.

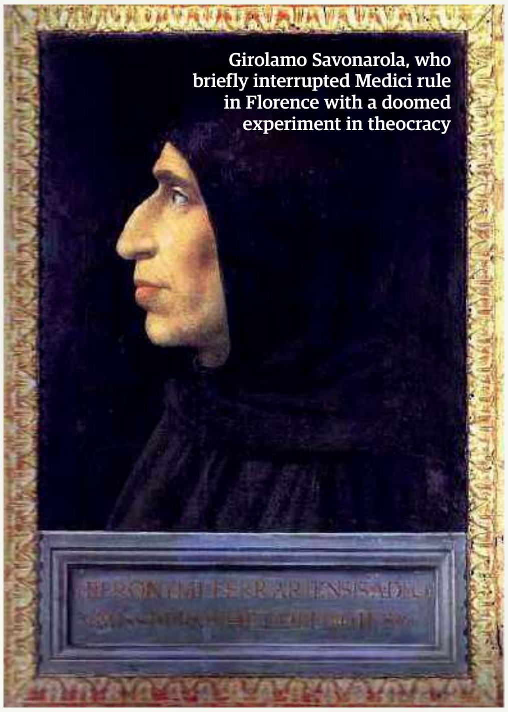
The building spree continued under Cosimo's son, Piero, and grandson, Lorenzo, who was nicknamed 'the Magnificent' for the ostentatiousness of his regime. He, like his grandfather, was a great patron of the arts, with Michelangelo working within the Palazzo Medici. Medici Florence housed 70,000 people by 1472, with 190 churches and 50 piazzas. There were 33 banks, too, as well as numerous shops selling fine goods, such as woollen cloth, and craftsmen, including goldsmiths, silversmiths, sculptors and stonecutters.

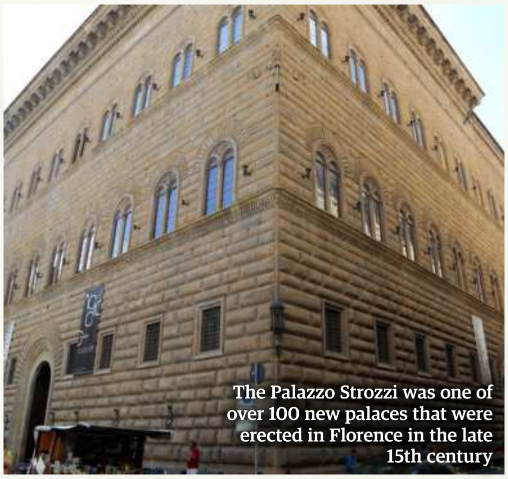
Although Lorenzo was renowned for the magnificent style in which he lived, he was dogged by financial troubles, which saw the collapse of the Medici Bank. His son, Piero, similarly struggled, eventually being exiled from Florence in favour of theocratic government by the radical preacher, Girolamo Savonarola, who burned many works of art. Savonarola would himself be burned in 1498.

After some years of turmoil, the Medici returned to Florence in 1512 under Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He owed his position, largely, to the political abilities of his brother, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, who entered the city at the head of 1,500 troops. The cardinal's election in 1513, as Pope Leo X, was the crowning glory of the family's reinstatement, with the Medici pope making a ceremonial entry to Florence in 1515. Amidst firework displays and gun salutes, the crowds came out to welcome the pontiff, while triumphal arches and obelisks were erected in his honour. The city itself was modified to be displayed in its glory, with buildings demolished to open up vistas so that the pageants could be better viewed.

While Leo's election was a triumph for the Medici and for Florence, there was still considerable discontent at the return of Medici rule. In 1527 the troops of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles

> "AMIDST FIREWORK DISPLAYS AND GUN SALUTES, THE CROWDS CAME OUT TO WELCOME THE PONTIFF"


Girolamo Savonarola, who briefly interrupted Medici rule in Florence with a doomed experiment in theocracy


The Palazzo Strozzi was one of over 100 new palaces that were erected in Florence in the late 15th century

Giulio de' Medici, Archbishop of Florence
1513
From the late-15th century, the Medici regularly reach the top of the church hierarchy. In 1513 Giulio de' Medici becomes Archbishop of Florence. He later becomes Pope Clement VII.

Leo X in Florence
1515
The former Giovanni de' Medici, who has become Pope Leo X, makes a ceremonial entry to Florence in 1515. He receives a lavish welcome, with pageants, fireworks and celebrations.

The Medici flee
1527
When news of the sacking of Rome by the Holy Roman Emperor reaches Florence, the remaining Medici flee from the city. Their kinsman, Pope Clement VII is imprisoned by the emperor.

Siege of Florence
1529-1530
Florence's citizens are not eager for the Medici to return. However, after a siege of nearly a year they capitulate to the Holy Roman Emperor, who reinstates Medici rule.

Duke of Florence
1531
Alessandro de' Medici becomes the first duke of Florence in 1531, elevating the family to princely status. He is nicknamed 'the Moor' and is possibly the son of an African slave.

Alessandro's murder
1537
Alessandro de' Medici is despotic and highly unpopular. He is murdered on 6 January 1537 by his cousin, Lorenzaccio, who is also later murdered. Cosimo I, a distant cousin, succeeds him.

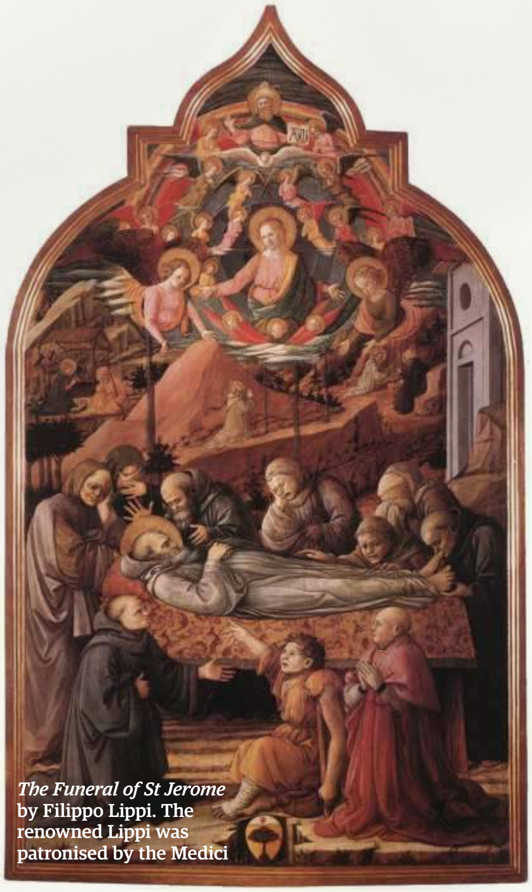
Uffizi Palace
1560
Work began in 1560 on the Uffizi Palace, which is intended by Cosimo I to house the city's magistrates and other officials. Its name translates as 'offices'.

The Vasari Corridor
1564
Cosimo I builds a covered walkway, known as the Vasari Corridor. This runs from the Palazzo Vecchio, through the Uffizi, over the Ponte Vecchio bridge and on to the Palazzo Pitti.

Grand duke of Tuscany
1569
Cosimo I's ambitions are realised when the pope creates him grand duke of Tuscany. This makes him the premier ruler in Italy and the ruler of his own state.

Devastating Plague
1630-1633
Florence is hit by a devastating plague between 1630 and 1633. Measures are taken to halt the disease, such as celebrating Mass in the open air. However, 7,000 people die.

Gian Gastone dies
1737
Gian Gastone de' Medici reigned as grand duke of Tuscany between 1723 and 1737. His unhappy marriage and failure to produce an heir permanently end Medici rule in Florence.

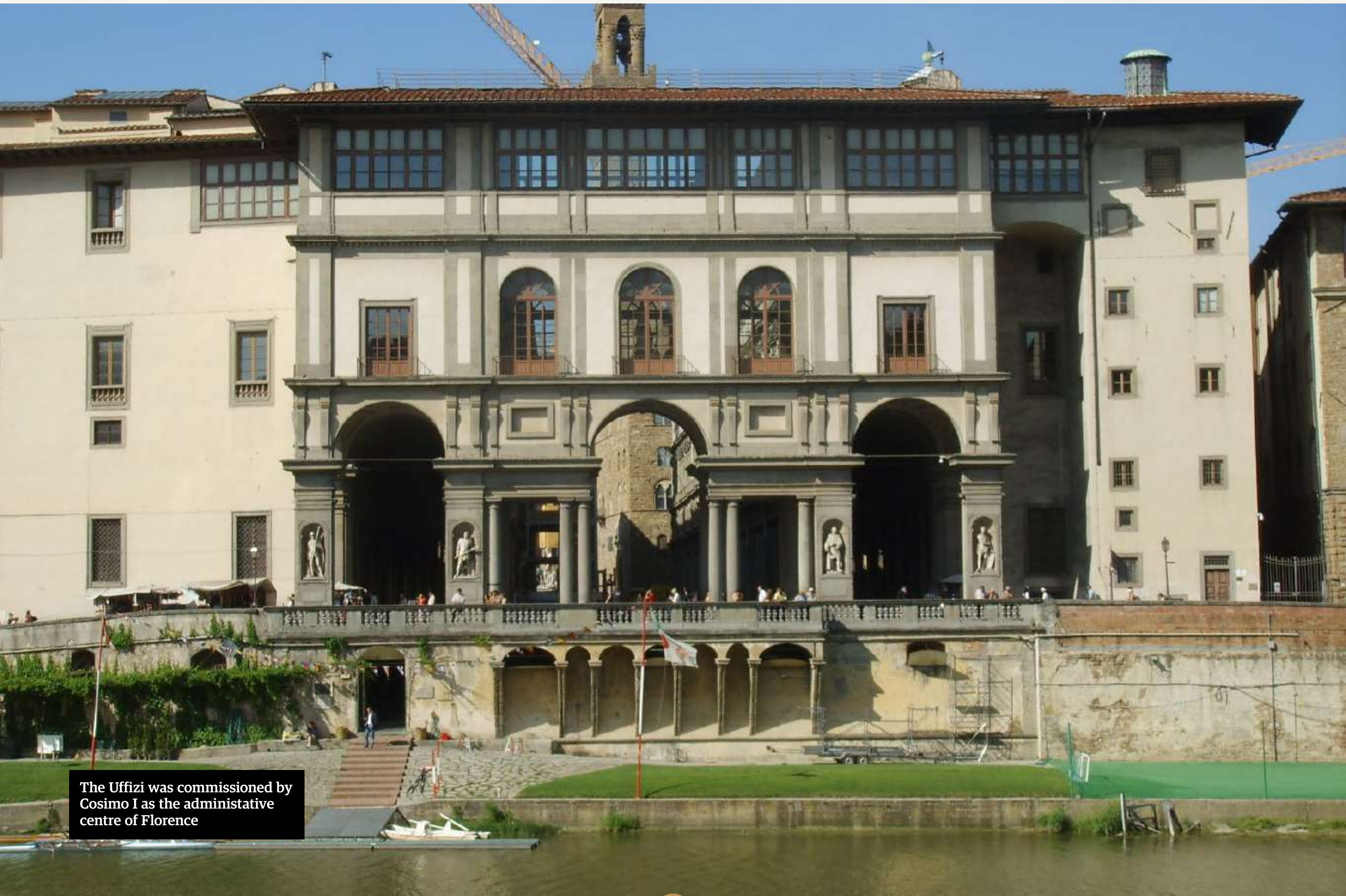

The Funeral of St Jerome by Filippo Lippi. The renowned Lippi was patronised by the Medici

V, sacked Rome, placing Clement VII – a second Medici pope – under house arrest. When the news of this reached Florence, bells were rung and bonfires lit as crowds shouted out anti-Medici slogans. As an effigy of the pope was thrown through the door of the church of Santissima Annunziata and then torn to pieces, the Medici fled the city – once again losing control of Florence. It was only when the pope came to terms with the emperor that it was agreed that the Medici would once again be returned to Florence, something that they recognised – due to the popularity of the republican government – would have to be achieved by force.

Florence's inhabitants, alarmed at the possibility of war, immediately set about strengthening the defences, while citizens were called to serve in the militia. In the autumn of 1529 when an imperial army arrived at the walls of Florence intent on returning the Medici, the city refused to yield. Florence held out for nearly a year, with the siege leaving it close to starvation as even mice were sold in the marketplace as food. Plague, too, broke out in 1530, further demoralising the defenders, with one contemporary writing that "no one knew what to say any more, what to do or where to go. Some tried to escape, some to hide, some to seek refuge in the Palazzo della Signoria or in the churches. Most of them merely entrusted themselves to God and awaited resignedly". As conditions worsened, the political situation within the city grew critical, with crowds demanding the return of the Medici to end their hunger. The city finally surrendered in August 1530, allowing the Medici to return again.

Much of the city and surrounding areas were devastated by the siege of 1529-30. At the same time, Alessandro de' Medici, who was created duke of Florence, built his own fortress, the Fortezza da Basso, with a view to defending his position against his own citizens. Alessandro also ordered the impounding of all private weapons, with many complaining of the new duke's tyranny and oppression. His murder in 1537 led to the accession of his distant cousin, Cosimo I, who was able to end the occupation of imperial troops in the city.

The Florence of Cosimo I and his immediate descendants was a considerably happier place than it had been under Alessandro. While Cosimo I could be ruthless in his treatment of his enemies, he enjoyed widespread support from the lower classes, who hoped for an improvement in conditions. Cosimo's suspicious and secretive


The Uffizi was commissioned by Cosimo I as the administative centre of Florence

“COSIMO I AND HIS DESCENDANTS WERE ALSO GREAT PATRONS OF THE ARTS”

nature meant that he was not loved by his people, but he was respected, with his creation as grand duke of Tuscany in 1569 marked with considerable rejoicing in the city. He also left political stability in Florence for the first time in generations, while the city's finances were strong.

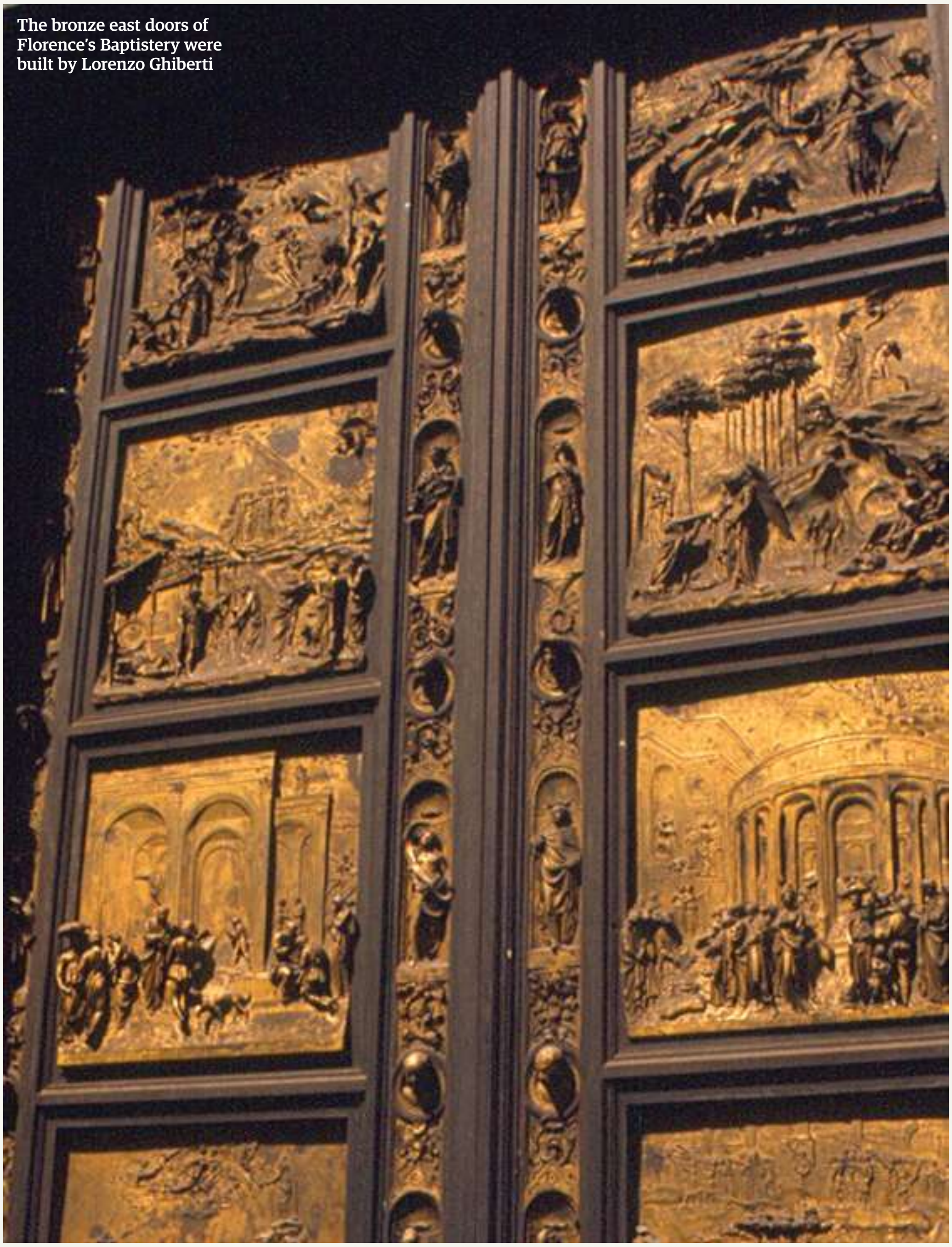
Cosimo also made great changes to the cityscape of Florence. Leaving the Palazzo Medici, he moved his court to the Palazzo Vecchio, besides which he constructed the ornate Uffizi Palace as an office building to house the city's officials. Cosimo, too, extended the already enormous Palazzo Pitti on the south bank of the Arno, as well as creating the famous Boboli Gardens.

Cosimo I and his descendants were also great patrons of the arts and science, with his grandson, Cosimo II, notably a patron of Galileo, who named the four moons of Jupiter that he discovered the 'Medici Stars'. The popularity of the family was also steadily growing, particularly when the easy-going Ferdinando II refused to leave his city in 1630 during a major outbreak of plague.

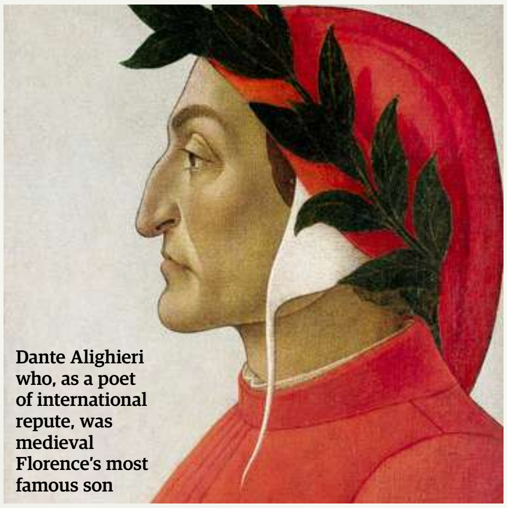
Plague had always been a problem in Medieval and early modern cities, where people lived closely together. The 1630 outbreak, however, was particularly virulent, with at least 7,000 citizens dying - their bodies carried out of their houses in carts for quick disposal, while houses were regularly fumigated and Mass said in the open air to avoid the confined spaces of the city's churches.

Although the Medici government was stable and Florence was increasingly becoming a tourist attraction to foreign visitors, Tuscany was growing increasingly impoverished. This decline was assisted by the 53-year reign of the religious fanatic, Cosimo III, from 1670. Cosimo persecuted Florence's Jewish community, while he also ordered anyone caught taking part in traditional May Day festivities to be whipped. When he died in 1723 he left Tuscany one of the poorest nations in Europe, although Florence continued to attract attention due to its rich artistic legacy.

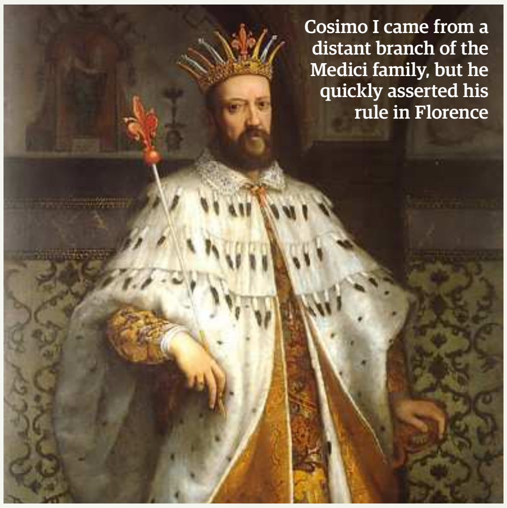
With Cosimo III's death Medici rule in Florence had only one generation left to run. The city was bankrupt, full of beggars and many of its palaces abandoned. Its fortunes would eventually improve, but with the death of Cosimo III's son, Gian Gastone, in 1737, the Medici family's turbulent rule in Florence had ended.



The bronze east doors of Florence's Baptistery were built by Lorenzo Ghiberti



Dante Alighieri who, as a poet of international repute, was medieval Florence's most famous son



Cosimo I came from a distant branch of the Medici family, but he quickly asserted his rule in Florence

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COSIMO DE' MEDICI: KING IN ALL BUT NAME

The quietly ambitious Cosimo de' Medici added absolute power to his family's impressive fortune, and transformed them from banking supremos to a dynasty to be reckoned with

Words **June Woolerton**

Much like the buildings he commissioned and the artwork he backed, Cosimo de' Medici took over Florence completely. His power was so widespread that Pope Pius II called him a "king in all but name", while after his death, the city he had helped make great awarded him the title of Pater Patriae, or 'father of the country'. But Cosimo's domination had been stealthy and clever as well as all-consuming. He was the puppet master of Florence, directing every part of the city's life while never openly putting himself above anyone.

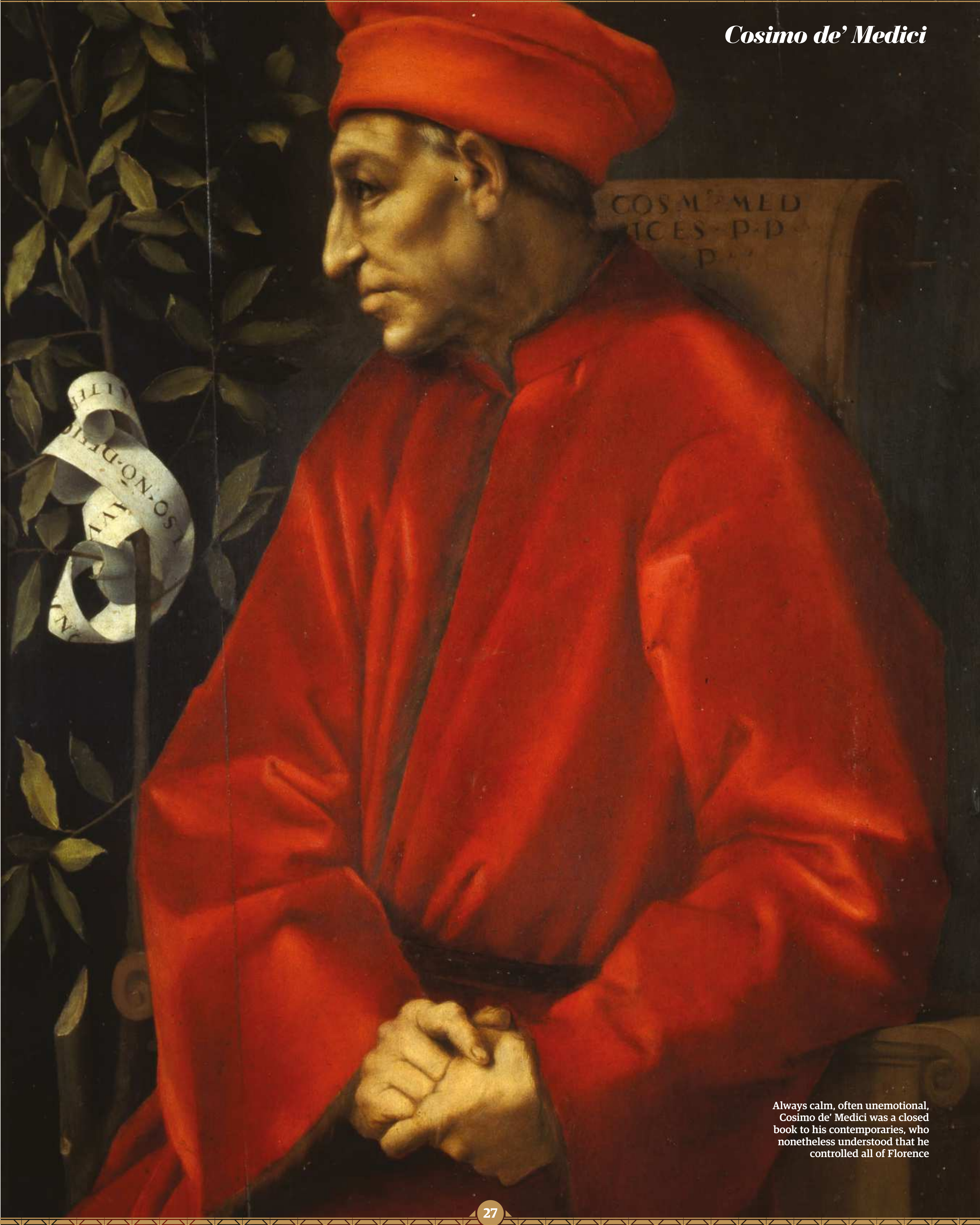
Cosimo's was a quiet ambition, but it was evident in everything he did. Bookish and interested in learning for its own sake, he began buying manuscripts as a young man. While his contemporaries might expect to accrue half a dozen books in their lifetime, Cosimo had silently accumulated 70 before he turned 30, including works by Cicero and Julius Caesar. Like other wealthy men of his generation, he travelled extensively, but Cosimo returned able to speak French and German before turning his attention to learning Arabic. And when he was given shelter in Venice during exile at the hardest moment of his life, his thank-you gift to the city was a library complete with precious books. Cosimo was never loud or bellicose, but he set his own standards and invariably got exactly what he wanted.

It was a trait he had inherited from his father, Giovanni di Bicci. The founder of the Medici banking fortune had welcomed Cosimo and his twin brother, Damiano, in 1389, three years after an advantageous marriage to Piccarda Bueri, who brought noble blood as well as a healthy dowry to their union. The boys' names had been chosen to honour two saints who were known as miracle working doctors, or medici. Damiano died as an infant and Cosimo grew up alongside a younger brother, Lorenzo, in the family home, Casa Vecchia, where he received a gentleman's education while watching his father turn the Medici Bank into one of the biggest businesses in Europe.

Cosimo's father was also determined that he would start perfecting the family trade at a young age while learning to serve Florence too so that it, one day, could serve him. Cosimo was named a Priori, or 'governor', of the city in 1415 and travelled as an ambassador to Milan, Bologna and even the papal court in Rome in the early 1420s. By then, the Medici had secured the confidence of Pope Martin V and lucrative banking contracts from the Vatican, and when Giovanni stepped aside in favour of Cosimo and Lorenzo in 1420, he gave them a booming business.

Cosimo's role at the head of the Medici Bank gave him power, but he was also establishing himself as a politician. Alongside his cousin, Averardo de' Medici, he began to build a faction at the Palazzo della Signoria, which governed the city-state. Using all kinds of bribes, from preferential rates on loans to the promise of work, they secured votes and support. Cosimo's cunning was evident even at this early stage of his career. He never referred to those he illegally paid to take his side by name, always calling them amici or 'friends'.

Cosimo didn't seek or crave public office, preferring to direct from behind the scenes. Nevertheless, by 1426, the Medici held such influence in the Signoria that Rinaldo degli Albizzi told a public meeting that the new men were a threat to the very way of life in Florence, adding: "If you let them take over the government, it will be your ruin".



Cosimo de' Medici

Always calm, often unemotional, Cosimo de' Medici was a closed book to his contemporaries, who nonetheless understood that he controlled all of Florence

PIERO DE' MEDICI: IN COSIMO'S SHADOW

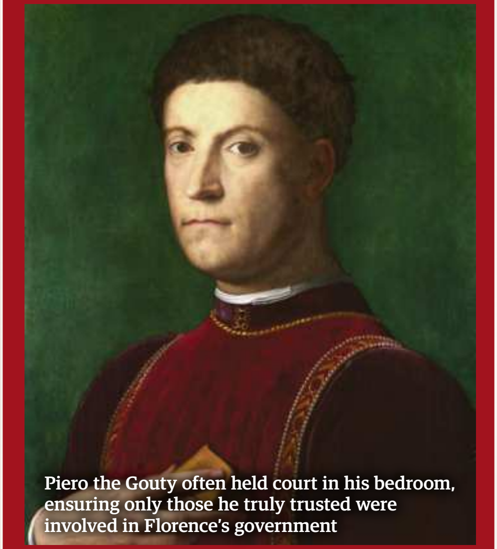
Son of one great ruler, father of another, Piero de' Medici is best known by his unfortunate nickname, 'the Gouty'

Just as Cosimo de' Medici was beginning to show his brilliance as a banker, politician and schemer, he guaranteed his family's future by fathering a son. Piero was born in 1416 at the Medici house on the Via Larga in Florence. Soon, ambitious Cosimo was collecting free-thinking tutors for his child with the same gusto he collected books, and Piero was given an outstanding humanist education.

Like many in Florence, Piero spent years in Cosimo's shadow, but when his father died in 1464, he soon showed himself to be an able banker, although lacking in diplomatic skills. His decision to call in loans from long-time Medici supporters created enemies that he didn't need, especially when, two years into his tenure, he faced a coup which he escaped thanks, in part, to the work of his son, Lorenzo. In 1467, he enjoyed military success when Florentine troops helped defeat the Venetian army, following disagreements over the new ruler of Milan.

Like his father, Piero had a passion for the arts, although he preferred pieces from Northern Europe. He also shared the family affliction of gout. By the time he took power, Piero often found walking difficult. With politics and commerce relying on the Medici, the city's business had to be done in his own home, turning the family's residences into the de facto power bases of Florence.

Gout eventually contributed to Piero's death on 2 December 1469. Lorenzo built him a magnificent tomb, even though Piero would be remembered as the quiet shadow between two great rulers.


Piero the Gouty often held court in his bedroom, ensuring only those he truly trusted were involved in Florence's government

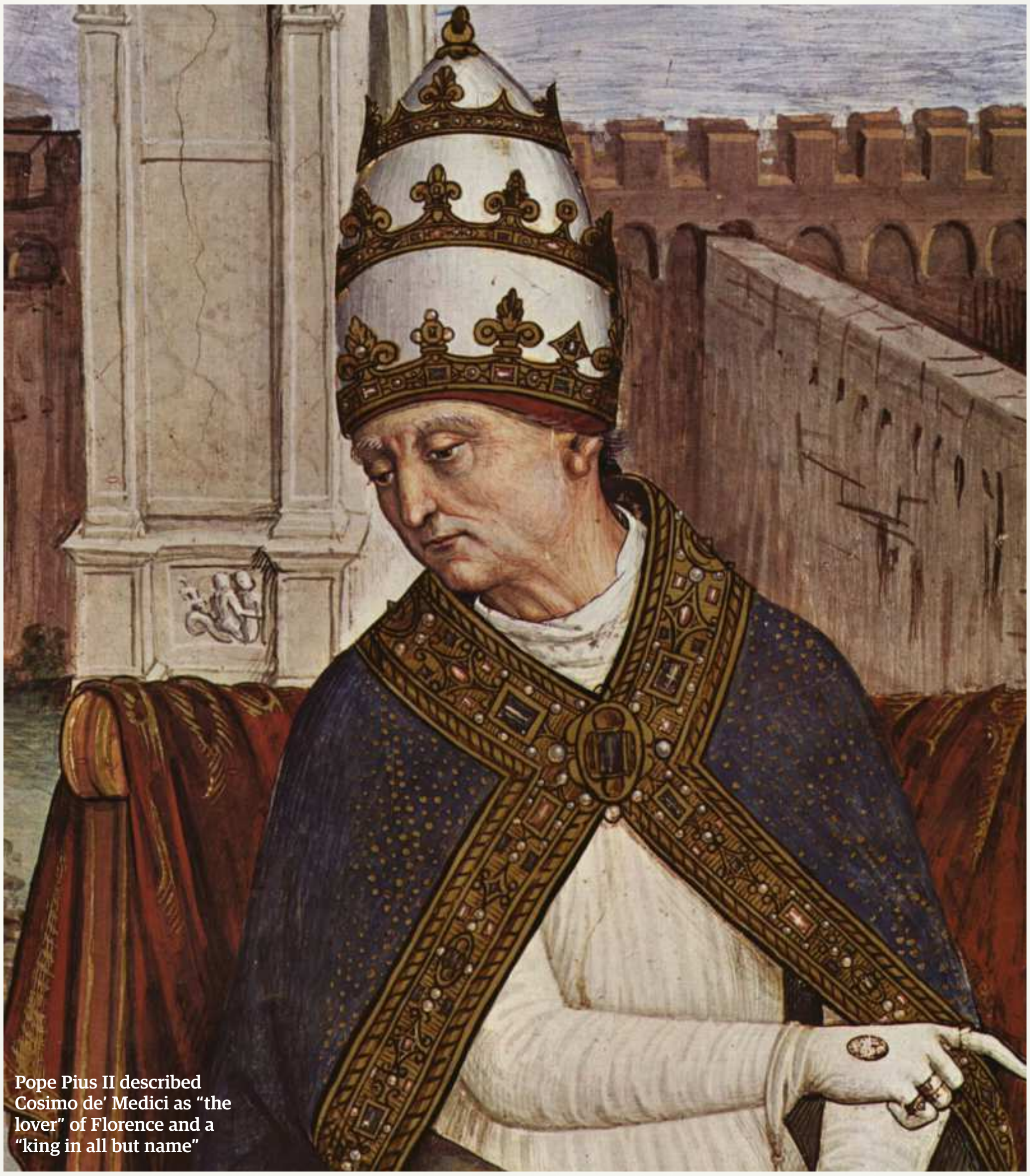
Cosimo de' Medici became head of his family in 1429, on the death of Giovanni di Bicci, and one of his first actions was to authorise short-term loans to the city of Florence as it became embroiled in a war against Lucca. The scheme didn't make huge profits for the Medici, but it did win them popular support, as they were seen to have risked their fortune to help their city in its time of need.

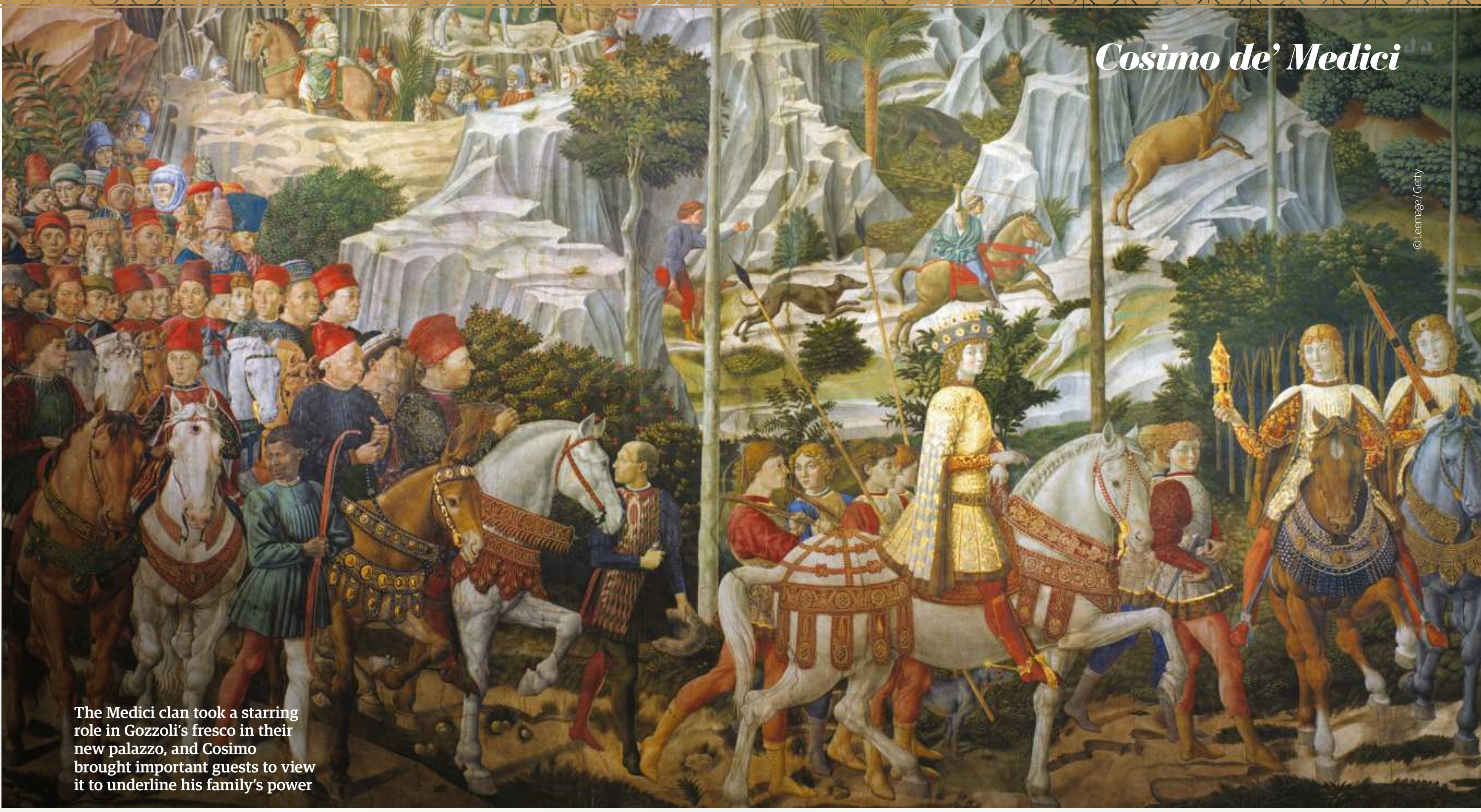
The conflict proved personally dangerous for Cosimo, who had become too important and too dangerous for his rivals. They invited him to the Signoria for talks in September 1433, only to arrest him as he arrived in Florence. When he was put on trial, he stood accused of using the war against Lucca for his own profits. Once a guilty verdict was declared, Rinaldo tried to get Cosimo executed for treason, but instead the banker, his family and associates were sent into exile. Less than a year later, Cosimo was the absolute master of Florence.

The Florentine citizens soon came to miss his wealth and patronage, as well as his apparently populist ideas for government of the city. And within months of his exile, Cosimo's amici came good for him. In the late summer of 1434, the Signoria came under the control of a Medici majority and they soon told Rinaldo that they intended to bring Cosimo home. When Rinaldo tried to stage an armed coup, the amici were ready for him while Pope Eugene IV told him to back down, afraid he would lose the financial backing of the Medici.

By the end of September, Cosimo's exile was formally ended and his rival was expelled from Florence. Soon after his return, he made one of the few overtly political gestures of his career when he decided that the selection of candidates for election to the Signoria would reside with him alone, arguing that the move was needed to protect Florence's security. He was now in complete control of the city, marking the start of a 30-year period when, despite never being formally declared leader, he ran every part of Florentine life.

His authority relied as much on money as diplomacy, but then Cosimo had inherited all the banking genius that had helped his father flourish. He set up branches across Europe, including in


Pope Pius II described Cosimo de' Medici as "the lover" of Florence and a "king in all but name"



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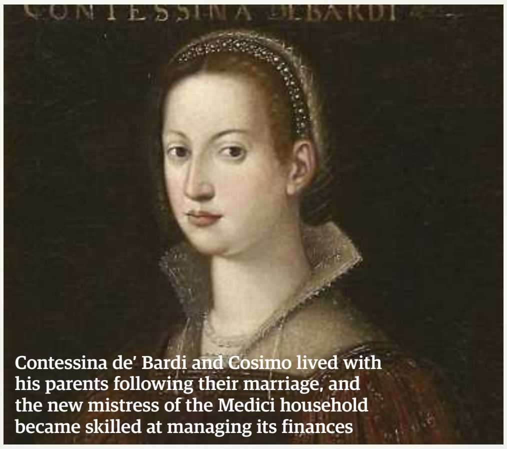
The Medici clan took a starring role in Gozzoli's fresco in their new palazzo, and Cosimo brought important guests to view it to underline his family's power

> "HIS AUTHORITY RELIED AS MUCH ON MONEY AS DIPLOMACY"

London, Bruges, Milan and Avignon, and within ten years of taking control of the Medici Bank, Cosimo was bringing in profits of over 100,000 florins (over 350 kilograms of gold). Cosimo nurtured his family's interests in other trades including wool and silk and by 1457, the personal fortune he reported to the tax authorities was 122,000 florins, while his bank was involved with some of the most lucrative businesses in Florence.

His new offices also provided him with a network of information that helped him shape his political strategy. His creation of a new bank in Ancona in 1436 became a means of supporting Francesco Sforza, an ambitious mercenary soldier with his eye on the duchy of Milan. Cosimo knew that Sforza's success would be a useful tool for Florence and his many business interests there as it would help guarantee, ultimately, peace in northern Italy. Cosimo helped arrange a marriage for his ally to the only daughter of the duke of Milan, and when the noble died and Sforza had to fight for his inheritance, the Medici maestro sent ample resources to help in the battle. With his protégé installed in Milan, Cosimo had achieved a balance of power against Venice and Naples that would leave Florence free of major threats of unrest for half a century.



Contessina de' Bardi and Cosimo lived with his parents following their marriage, and the new mistress of the Medici household became skilled at managing its finances

At home, too, he was shaping the future of his city to suit his own interests. He used the installation of one of the most ardent amici as Gonfaloniere in the summer of 1458, to impose a plan to set up a permanent authority to decide who held high office. When the Signoria rejected the idea, Cosimo put it to the people on a day when mercenaries belonging to Francesco Sforza just happened to be roaming the Florentine streets. The unsurprising backing for his plan gave the Medici complete control of the government of Florence.

Pope Pius II's observation of Cosimo, that "political questions are settled in his house… the man he chooses holds office, he it is who decides peace and war" was an apt summary. But Cosimo believed he was helping his beloved Florence as well as himself and his family. He travelled to Ferrara in 1438, where Pope Eugene IV had just opened a council to try and bridge the gap between the Church in Western Europe and its eastern Orthodox counterpart. But when plague arrived, Cosimo pounced. He persuaded Eugene to bring the council to Florence instead and so, as 1439 got under way, he stood at the city gates to welcome the Greek Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as the pope himself. Leading thinkers of both creeds arrived too, and for five months, Florence was at the heart of European debate, before becoming the setting for the agreement to unite the Eastern and Western churches. It was a prestigious moment for Florence, but Cosimo also benefitted personally, making large profits from the council's presence in the city he called his own.

But like many of his achievements, it appeared to benefit others more than himself. Cosimo de' Medici was a master of good PR. He had heeded the advice of his father, who told him on his deathbed to "never go against the will of the people", and outwardly, Cosimo never did. He cultivated the image of a republican while spending chunks of his fortune on Florence. And nowhere was his generosity more evident than in his passion for the arts. Cosimo is reported to have said in later life that spending money gave him far more joy

Cosimo's younger son by Contessina, Giovanni, at times failed to live up to his father's high standards

COSIMO PATER PATRIAE

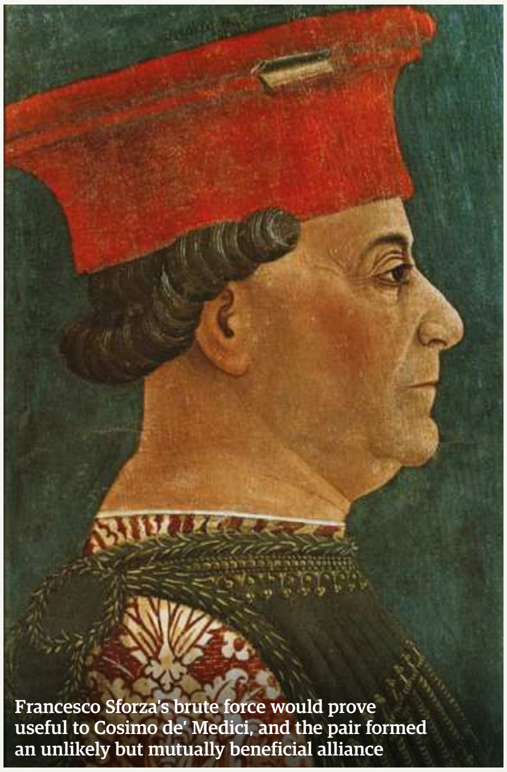
The title he never knew he would receive became his greatest epitaph, as 'Pater Patriae' was engraved on likenesses of Cosimo around Florence

than earning it, and he used his wealth to furnish his city with some of the finest buildings and paintings in Western Europe. He was a long-time patron of the architect Michelozzo di Bartolomeo, who designed the imposing Palazzo Medici in the heart of Florence as well as the family's summer villa at Careggi. Medici money also saw Michelozzo refashion existing structures, including the convent of San Marco and the Palazzo Vecchio, into renowned and innovative designs, while his patronage saw Brunelleschi complete the Duomo of the Church of Santa Maria del Fiore.

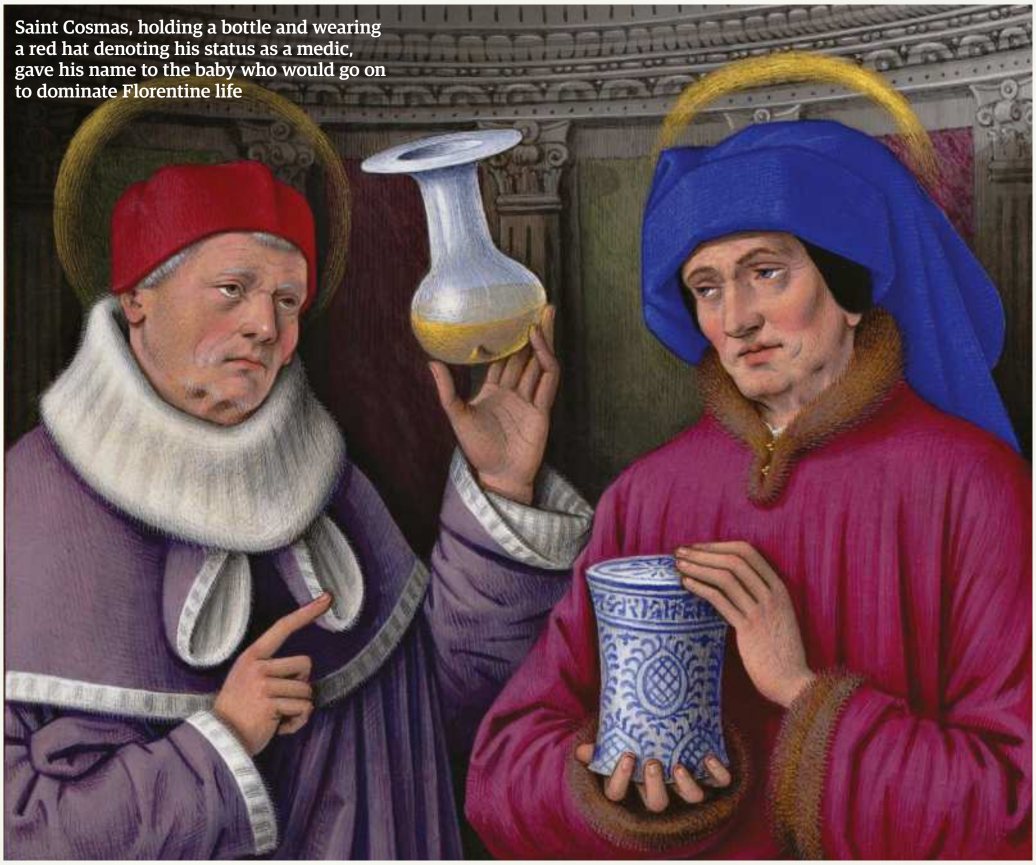
Inside these buildings, which dominated Florence and the surrounding area, Cosimo installed exquisite sculptures and frescoes. He supported artists including Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi, and commissioned Benozzo Gozzoli to produce the famous fresco inside the chapel of the Palazzo Medici, which depicted members of the dynasty in a tableau set around the Magi making their way through Tuscany.

His patronage of Donatello led to the creation of the bronze statues of *Judith and Holofernes* and *David*, but rather than keep these inside his own residences, Cosimo had them placed at the Signoria. Their message of the weak overcoming the mighty underlined his public image of a man of the people who had helped his city to rule itself. However, Cosimo had one eye on the future, too. Gozzoli's fresco showed two of the Three Wise Men with the faces of famous rulers: those of the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Byzantine emperor. The third bore the features of Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo - a clear indication of how he saw the future of the Medici dynasty.

Lorenzo was part of a complex family network that, like Florence, remained completely under



Francesco Sforza's brute force would prove useful to Cosimo de' Medici, and the pair formed an unlikely but mutually beneficial alliance



Saint Cosmas, holding a bottle and wearing a red hat denoting his status as a medic, gave his name to the baby who would go on to dominate Florentine life

Cosimo's control. In around 1415, Cosimo had married Contessina de' Bardi, who came from a once-influential banking dynasty that had fallen on comparatively hard times. However, Contessina also had noble blood – something the Medici were lacking but more than prepared to pay for. They had two sons – Piero (born in 1416) and Giovanni (born in 1421) – who were raised in the splendour of the Medici court.

But Contessina soon found herself raising an illegitimate child. Cosimo began a relationship with a slave, Maddalena, he bought in Venice and when she gave birth to a boy, named Carlo, the child came to live with his father and half-brothers. And in a sign of his ambition for a more noble standing for his dynasty, Cosimo chose a path taken by many aristocratic families at the time and destined his youngest son, Carlo, for the church.

Meanwhile, Piero and Giovanni were being groomed to take over the family's banking business. It wasn't a straightforward transition. Cosimo had inherited the firm alongside his brother, Lorenzo, and when his sibling died in 1440, his share of the business passed to his only surviving son, Pierfrancesco. Once he reached his majority, Cosimo had to guide all three men to learn to work together to safeguard the family's financial future. However, he knew that he would pass on his political power over Florence undivided to his elder son, Piero.

Cosimo's health began to fail as he entered his seventies. He had long suffered from gout and began to spend increasing amounts of time behind the closed doors of the Palazzo Vecchio. His influence remained strong and he directed an extravagant welcome for Pope Pius II when he made a state visit to Florence in 1459, but he left many of the public events to his relatives.

The death of his younger son, Giovanni, in 1463 left him devastated, and his spirit as well as his health began to fade. He headed to the villa at Careggi, as usual, in the early summer of 1464, but it would be his final journey. Cosimo de' Medici died there on 1 August 1464, and Florence was thrown into deep mourning.

Cosimo's funeral was conducted in much the same way as he had lived his extraordinary life. It was low-key, unexpectedly frugal and yet had a huge impact. His simple coffin was carried to the Church of San Lorenzo on 2 August 1464, accompanied by his family, where a short ceremony preceded his burial. But within days, his son and successor, Piero, had received letters of condolence from the King of France and Pope Pius II.

His beloved Florence would pay Cosimo the greatest honour. Soon after his death, the Signoria he had controlled without ever appearing to rule, voted to grant him the title of Pater Patriae, or 'father of the country' – an honour previously bestowed upon one of Cosimo's heroes, Cicero. It was a fitting tribute to a man who had made Florence his own.

Cosimo's rise to power had seemed inevitable thanks to his clever manoeuvrings and his ability to keep them behind closed doors. His brilliance and cunning turned Florence into the undisputed realm of the Medici, and a foundation stone for centuries of brilliance and power.

COSIMO'S TRIBUTE TO THE CLASSICAL WORLD

The Medici maestro used his money to finance a modern version of the famous Platonic Academy, helping spread new ideas

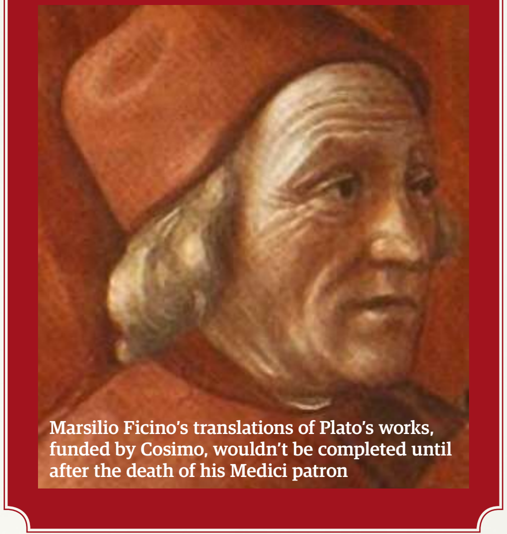
Cosimo de' Medici's love of learning was like much else in his life. It gave great benefit to the man himself, but he also used it as a tool to help others.

When the Council of Ferrara transferred to Florence in 1439, it brought with it some of the leading philosophers and humanists of the age. Among them was the Byzantine thinker Gemistus Plethon, who helped to revive Plato's ideas in Western Europe. Cosimo and his entourage were enraptured by his ideas, and he was soon called a 'second Plato'. The experience would have a profound effect on Cosimo, who put up the cash to form the Platonic Academy – a group to discuss and promulgate philosophy and the Classics.

The group, based on the Akademia run by Plato on the outskirts of Athens, was led by Marsilio Ficino, selected for the role by Cosimo himself. The banker used his fortune to supply the academy with manuscripts of Plato's work which, along with other Classics, were translated into Latin.

Cosimo gathered to it some of the finest minds in Europe, including Pico della Mirandola and Angelo Ambrogini, known as Poliziano. Although the group never held regular meetings, they considered the Medici villa at Careggi as their base and when they did gather, their discussions took place there, beneath Cosimo's own roof. Despite the occasional nature of their debates, those involved with it considered themselves members of the Academy and they would come to have a major influence on Renaissance thinking.

Cosimo's passion for the Academy was continued by his grandson, Lorenzo.



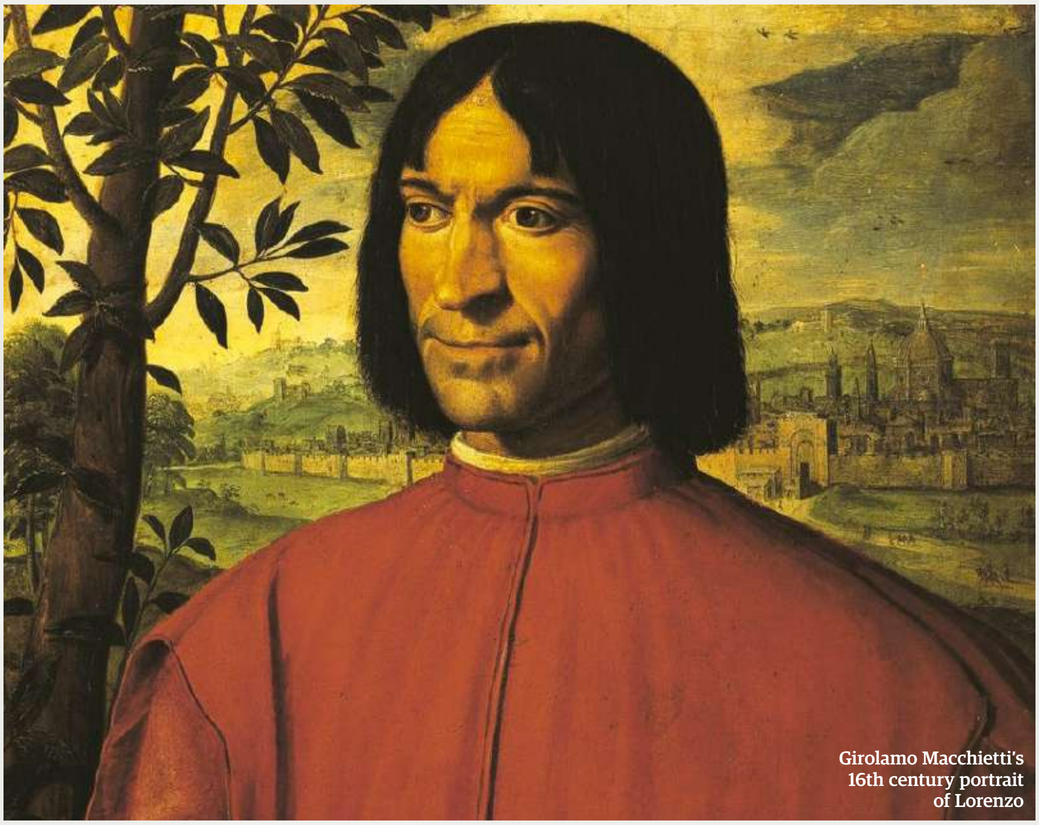
Marsilio Ficino's translations of Plato's works, funded by Cosimo, wouldn't be completed until after the death of his Medici patron

LORENZO DE' MEDICI: THE MAGNIFICENT

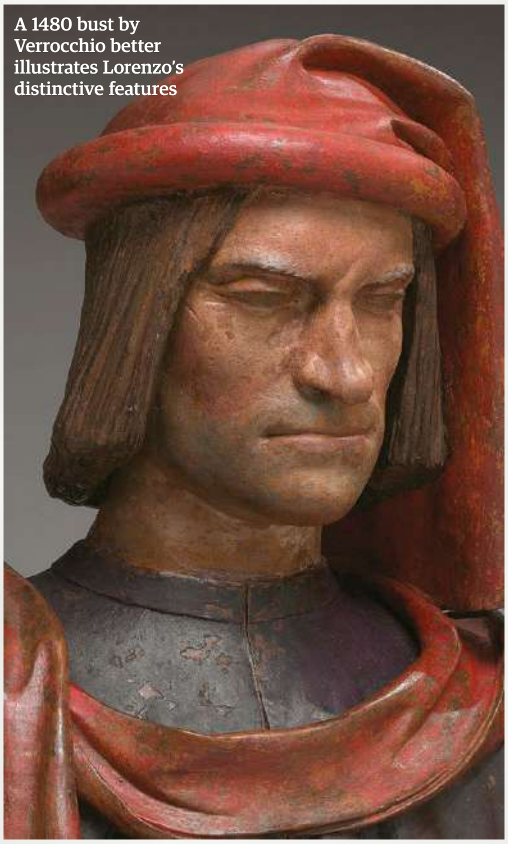
Statesman, ruler and patron of arts and letters, 'il Magnifico' did more than most to usher in the Renaissance and put Florence on the artistic map

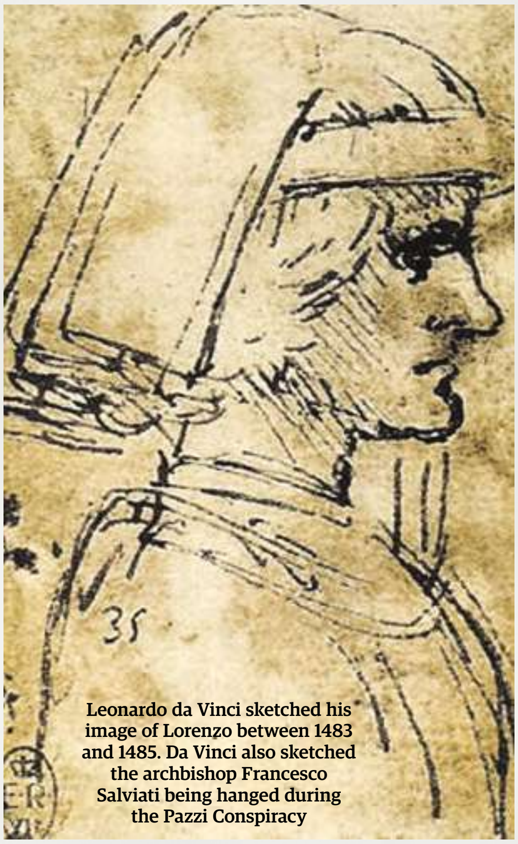
Lorenzo de' Medici was born in Florence on 1 January 1449 and was son of Piero the Gouty. In his childhood, Lorenzo displayed a high level of intelligence, a curious mind and a prodigious memory alongside a healthy sense of humour. Cosimo the Elder, Lorenzo's grandfather, was particularly fond of the boy and helped to ensure the avenues to study and expanding his horizons were always open - especially as his own son, Piero was weak and the elder Medici feared he wouldn't long survive him. As such, Cosimo took it upon himself to groom the young Lorenzo for authority and ensured he enjoyed the very best education available, learning Greek, Latin and philosophy and being sent to attend the Platonic Academy of Marsilio Ficino, where he learned to sing, play the lyre, and develop a deep-rooted love for poetry and the arts.

At the age of 16, having spent countless hours in the presence of respected statesmen and humanists by way of informal schooling, Lorenzo entered politics, all the while writing sonnets and poems in his spare time. In 1469, on the advice of his father, Lorenzo was wed to Clarice Orsini, establishing links with one of Rome's most powerful and noble families. Later that same year, Lorenzo's father passed away and the 20-year-old Lorenzo assumed

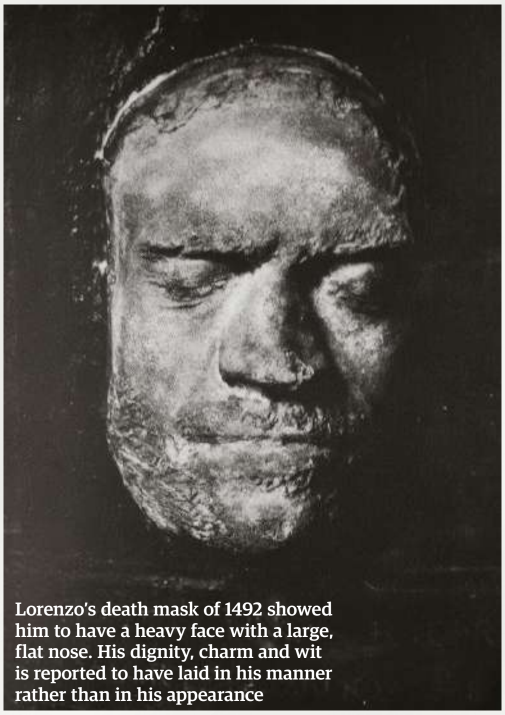


Girolamo Macchietti's 16th century portrait of Lorenzo


A 1480 bust by Verrocchio better illustrates Lorenzo's distinctive features



Leonardo da Vinci sketched his image of Lorenzo between 1483 and 1485. Da Vinci also sketched the archbishop Francesco Salviati being hanged during the Pazzi Conspiracy


Lorenzo's death mask of 1492 showed him to have a heavy face with a large, flat nose. His dignity, charm and wit is reported to have laid in his manner rather than in his appearance

power of Florence along with his brother, Giuliano. Upon his accession to power, Lorenzo immediately let it be known that he intended to follow the example set by his grandfather and father in using constitutional methods to rule from behind the scenes without holding any public office.

Lorenzo's fledgling years in rule were a great success. Not only did he reach an agreement with Pope Sixtus IV to handle papal finances, but he saved Florence from famine following a bad harvest by importing large quantities of grain. He was a man of the people and they, in turn, lavished praise on him.

However, Lorenzo's relationship with the Church took a downturn as a result of him forging an alliance between Florence, Venice and Milan, thus marginalising the Church that was seeking to expand the papal territory. And the pope wasn't alone in his contempt for the Medici, as Florence's other power family, the Pazzi – who ran the city's largest bank – were striving to usurp the Medici and seize control of the city. The Pazzi allied with the pope and, through their bank, loaned him the money to purchase strategic land in Romagna, a region in northern Italy, to strengthen the papal's position. In retaliation for this slight, Lorenzo thwarted the pope's efforts to appoint Francesco Salviati, an ally of the Pazzi, as archbishop of Pisa by refusing to acknowledge him. As a result, Pope Sixtus IV, his nephew Girolamo Riario and Francesco Salviati entered into a conspiracy with the Pazzi family to assassinate the Medici brothers. The deadly plot was carried out during Easter mass on 26 April 1478 at the cathedral in Florence. A group of men fell on Giuliano de' Medici and stabbed him 19 times during the mass. Lorenzo managed to escape with non life-threatening wounds and took sanctuary within the building. Unable to reach Lorenzo through a locked door, the conspirators left the cathedral and attempted to capture the town hall. However, they were relentlessly pursued by an angry mob of Florentine citizens and killed – Salviato himself was hanged from the wall of the town hall (this moment was captured in a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci). In retaliation for the brutal and public execution of the archbishop, the pope enlisted the king of Naples to attack the city. But before this full-scale war commenced, Lorenzo surrendered to the king and dissuaded him from his plan – a move that strengthened the Medici's position in Florence. Lorenzo even managed to repair his relationship with Sixtus in 1480 and peace was declared once more.

"HE WAS A MAN OF THE PEOPLE AND THEY, IN TURN, LAVISHED GREAT PRAISE ON HIM"

After surviving the deadly plot and emerging with increased prestige and with the unwavering support of his people (he was referred to as 'the needle on the Italian scales'), Lorenzo appointed the Council of Seventy to deal with matters of state while he set about embracing the arts in a period that coincided with Florence's greatest artistic contributions to the Renaissance. In what turned out to be the final decade of his life, Lorenzo paid the painters Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Fra Filippo Lippi handsomely to add beauty to the city and sent the humanist John Lascaris and the poet Angelo Poliziano off in search of manuscripts to bolster the city's libraries. Shrewdly recognising that the swelling of his city's libraries couldn't be achieved purely through acquisitions, Lorenzo was an early champion of the printing press and encouraged its use to copy and distribute the great literary works of the era.

Though Lorenzo himself contributed more than anyone to establishing Florence as one of the great artistic hotspots of the Renaissance, it came at a considerable cost to his family's fortunes. But his patronage of the great artists, architects and writers of the time had long-lasting benefits. The famous Platonic Academy frequently met at Lorenzo's palace, where Lorenzo proved intellectually equal to the likes of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino in the lively philosophical conversations that took place. Lorenzo also opened a school of sculpture in his garden of San Marco and one of its star pupils was nurtured and raised in the palace as if a member of the family. That youngster was a 15-year-old Michelangelo.

Lorenzo de' Medici died on 9 April 1492, at the start of an exciting new era of discovery, but Lorenzo the Magnificent did more than anyone to usher in the artistic and cultural shifts that would herald the dawn of fantastic new possibilities.

DEATH IN FLORENCE: THE PAZZI CONSPIRACY

The future of the Medici dynasty came under threat at Mass in the heart of Florence, but the conspiracy to unseat them actually consolidated their power in a bloody coup that shocked Europe

Words **June Woolerton**

As night fell on Florence on Easter Sunday 1478, a gruesome sight dominated the city's main square. Bodies, already starting to rot in the warm spring air, swung from the windows of the Palazzo della Signoria, while the ground below them was stained with blood from more violent executions. Just hours earlier, the dead had been roaming Florence's streets, determined to snatch power from the all-dominant Medici family. But their coup had failed, and while some of their accomplices fled in desperation or cowered nearby, hoping to evade the summary justice now rife in the city's streets, their corpses became focal points for angry crowds determined to keep the Medici in power. The Pazzi conspiracy had failed.

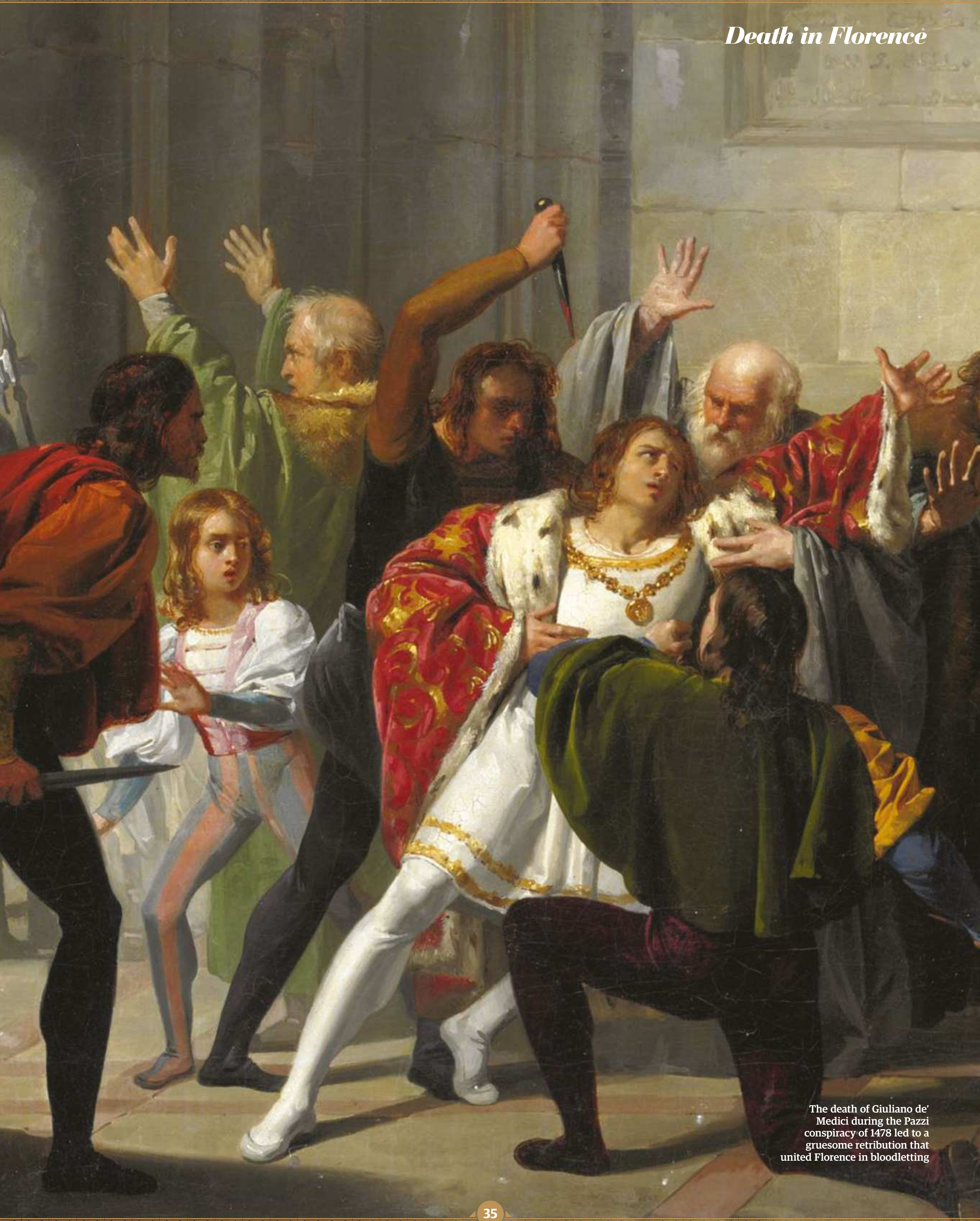
The fate of the plotters was in marked contrast to that of Giuliano de' Medici, whose life they had taken as they launched their doomed grab for power. Stabbed to death on the marble floor of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, his family and Florence mourned his passing. He would be buried in solemn splendour four days later in the family tomb at the Church of San Lorenzo. He rested with his father, Piero, and his grandfather, Cosimo – the man who had turned Florence into a Medici fiefdom. Giuliano's death left his brother, Lorenzo, as undisputed head of the family, but he had to take his revenge while nursing wounds endured in the cathedral attack, which had aimed to murder both brothers.

It had been a bold plot, many months in the making, but it had exploded into failure as its protagonists became too intoxicated with their own ideas while failing to fully understand the grip the Medici family had on Florence. Even the most senior of the conspirators, Pope Sixtus IV himself, was no match for the might of the Medici, who would continue to counter every move to damage them in the aftermath of the conspiracy. Within months of the bloody attack, the dynasty was once more in full control of Florence.

It had been their total dominance of the rich city-state that had led to the conspiracy in the first place. The main plotters – Francesco Salviati, Girolamo Riario and Francesco de' Pazzi – had begun to hatch their plan in Rome the previous summer. All had their own reasons for wanting the Medici out of the way, but all were agreed that the deaths of both Lorenzo and Giuliano were the only guarantee of grabbing total power away from the famous banking dynasty. And as their plans began to take shape, they agreed that the brothers had to die together to give their enemies the best chance of seizing control of Florence.

The Medici had ruled the city, almost unchallenged, for four decades by the time of the

Death in Florence



The death of Giuliano de' Medici during the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 led to a gruesome retribution that united Florence in bloodletting

THE MEN WHO MURDERED A MEDICI

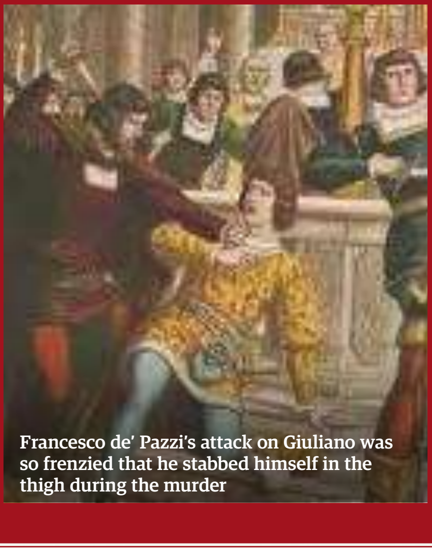
Conspirators Bernardo Bandini Baroncelli and Francesco de' Pazzi had more in common than just murder

On the day of his death, Giuliano de' Medici walked to the Duomo with a familiar face at his side. They chatted amiably before his companion hugged him goodbye. Differing accounts report it was either Francesco de' Pazzi or Bernardo Bandini Baroncelli who walked the victim to church, but all agree the hug was to check that Giuliano wasn't wearing armour. And within an hour, both Pazzi and Baroncelli had murdered their defenceless prey.

The two men angrily tore into Giuliano with their daggers and swords as they all attended High Mass on 26 April 1478, but they had been goading each other towards murder for months. Baroncelli was the more cool-headed of the assassins and had some weighty connections, while Francesco de' Pazzi was a leading member of his clan and manager of their bank in Rome. He was hot-headed and had been described as "restless".

However, as they attacked Giuliano, it was Baroncelli who set the frenzied tone, shouting "Here traitor!" as he dug his sword deep into his victim's chest. Francesco de' Pazzi remained silent, but delivered so many blows to Giuliano that he was still stabbing him as his lifeless body fell to the ground.

Francesco was dead, too, within hours, hanged from the windows of the Signoria. However, Baroncelli's links to the King of Naples allowed him to escape as far as Constantinople, where he was found in 1479. His execution, in Florence, took place just yards from the pavements where he or his co-conspirator had beguiled their victim to his death that Easter Sunday.


Francesco de' Pazzi's attack on Giuliano was so frenzied that he stabbed himself in the thigh during the murder

Pazzi conspiracy. Their rise from lowly bankers to kings in all but name meant that, on the death of their father Piero in 1469, Lorenzo and Giuliano had inherited vast wealth and complete control of politics in Florence. They held sway over all appointments, while their banking and business interests pervaded every corner of the city's life. Old families, like the Pazzi, resented them but also relied on them.

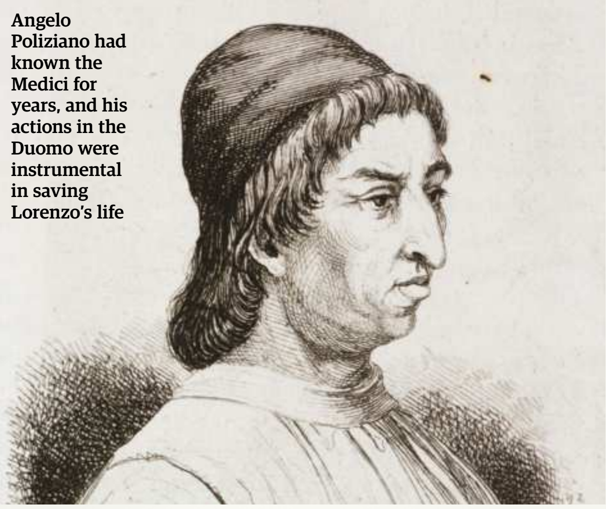
However, in the years leading up to the conspiracy, challenges had come in various guises. Chief among them was the parlous state of the Medici banking fortune, which had begun to decline under Piero de' Medici and which continued to falter when his sons took over the business. Its shaky nature was underlined in a tussle over the town of Imola, which would have disastrous consequences for all involved.

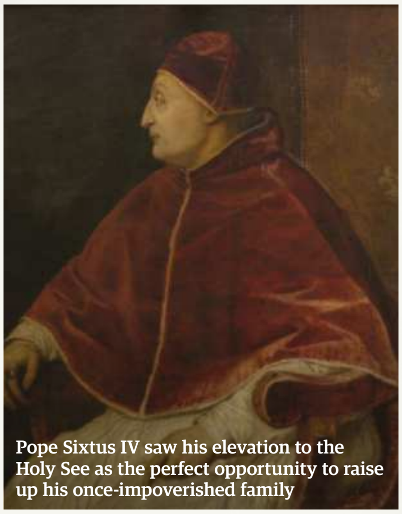
Small and pretty, Imola lay on the trade route between Florence and Venice, and Lorenzo kept a careful eye on its ownership. When it fell into the hands of his ally, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the duke of Milan, in 1473, Lorenzo set about negotiating its purchase and agreed a price of 100,000 florins. However, Pope Sixtus IV also wanted the town for his nephew, Girolamo Riario, who had just married Sforza's illegitimate daughter, Caterina, as part of a papal plan to build a family state in central Italy.

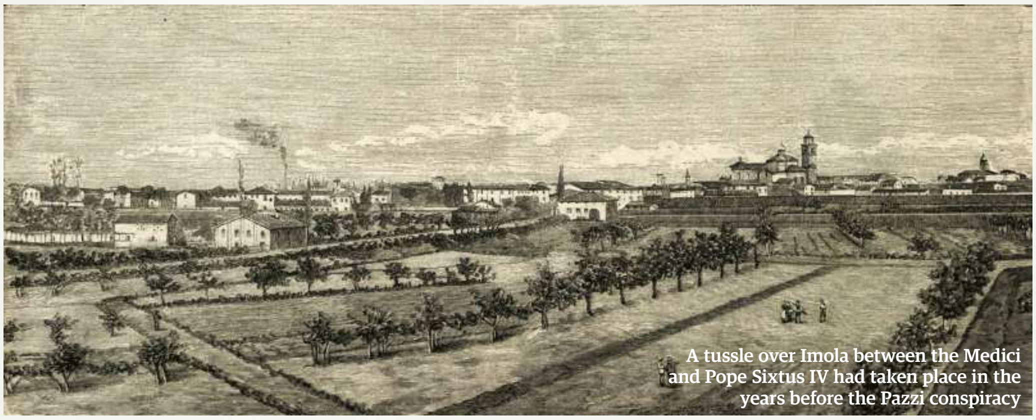
Sixtus offered 40,000 ducats for Imola, but had other weapons at his disposal. He threatened excommunication, which would make the Sforzas soiled goods, and suddenly the duke of Milan switched sides. The Medici had built their fortune on papal banking business, but for this deal, Sixtus got his cash elsewhere. It was loaned to him by the Pazzi bank in Rome, which had been prospering in the Eternal City while the Medici branch there suffered. Lorenzo saw the jewel of Imola disappear from his grasp while a rival family encroached on the papal revenues.

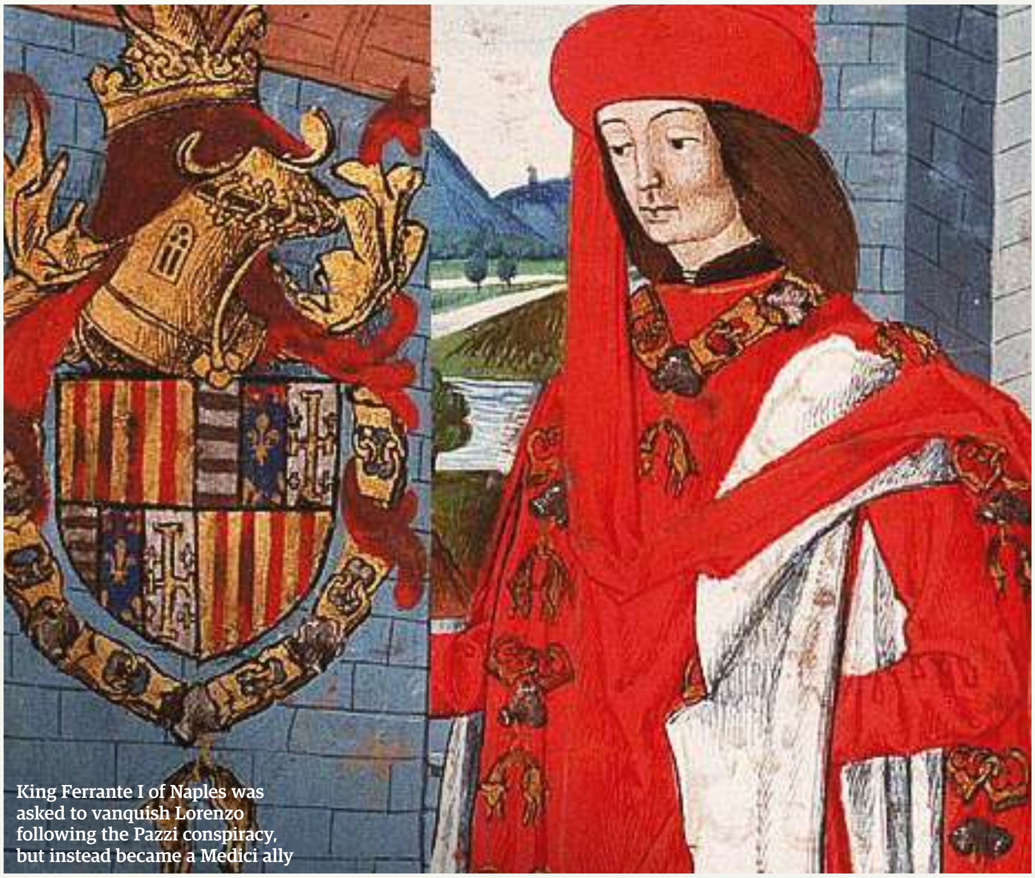
Francesco de' Pazzi, who managed the family's Roman business, had previously promised the Medici he wouldn't deal with the papacy, but the opportunity was simply too good for him to turn down. In the aftermath of the tussle for Imola, Sixtus gave lucrative banking revenues from the

> "OLD FAMILIES, LIKE THE PAZZI, RESENTED THE MEDICI BUT ALSO RELIED ON THEM"


Angelo Poliziano had known the Medici for years, and his actions in the Duomo were instrumental in saving Lorenzo's life


Pope Sixtus IV saw his elevation to the Holy See as the perfect opportunity to raise up his once-impoverished family


A tussle over Imola between the Medici and Pope Sixtus IV had taken place in the years before the Pazzi conspiracy

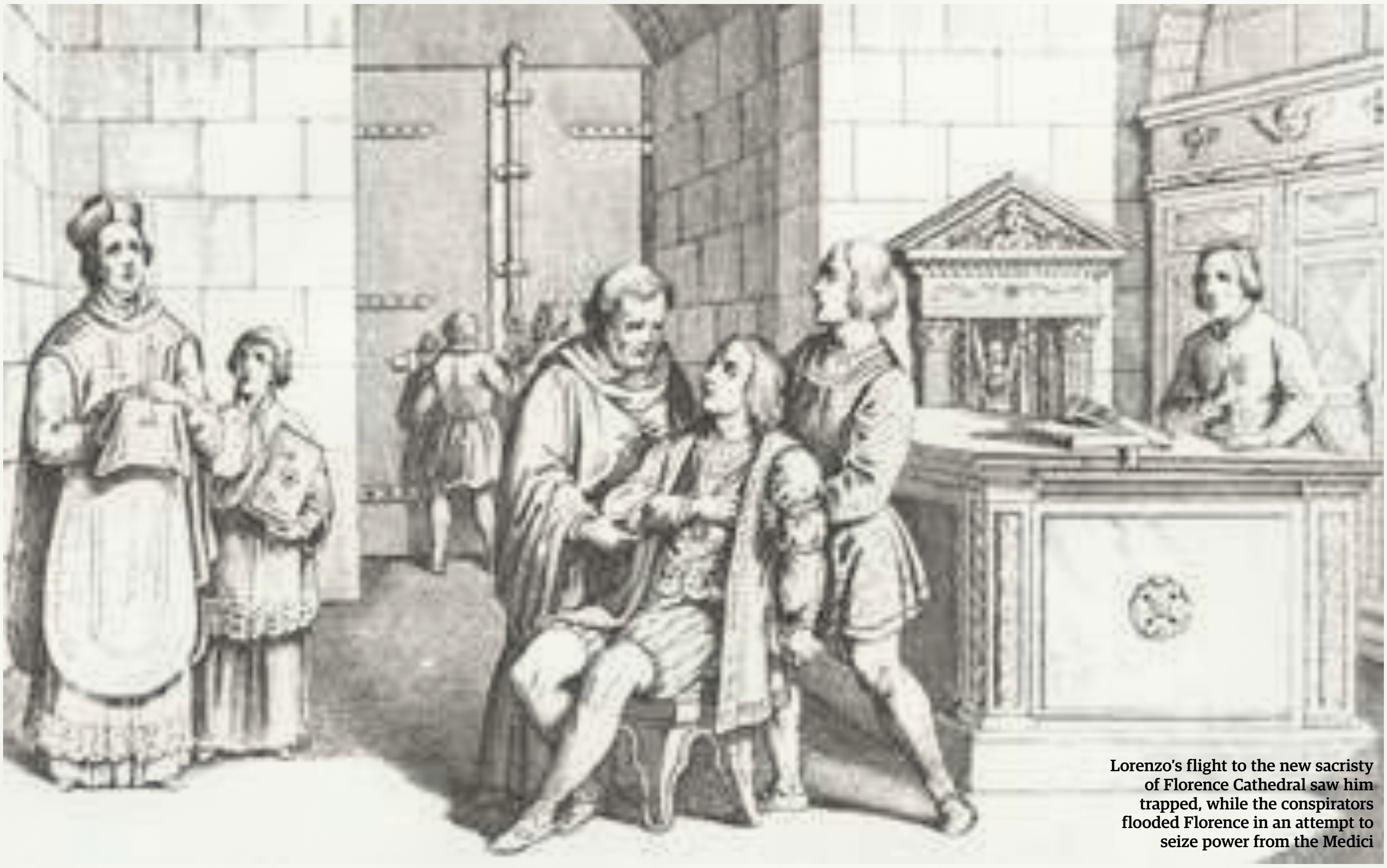

King Ferrante I of Naples was asked to vanquish Lorenzo following the Pazzi conspiracy, but instead became a Medici ally

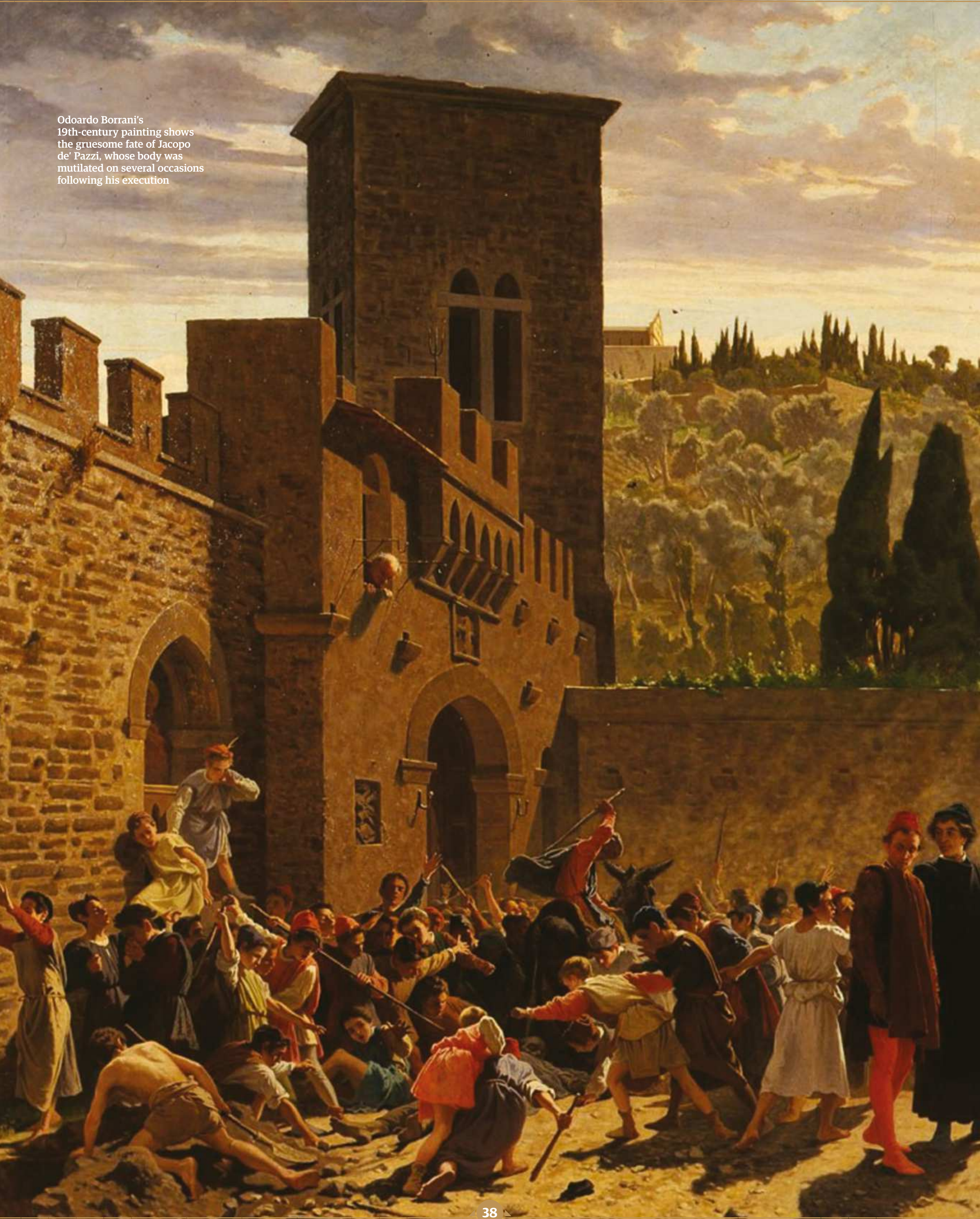
Holy See to the Pazzi family while the Salviati also benefitted from his business. Lorenzo had been outmanoeuvred.

Meanwhile, Sixtus continued his power grab by investing Francesco Salviati, another kinsman, as Archbishop of Pisa. Lorenzo refused to recognise the new prelate, putting him at odds, again, with the pope. He brought enough pressure to bear on Sixtus IV soon afterwards to prevent him handing the even more important See of Florence to Salviati. But with no chance of political power in his dynasty, Francesco Salviati intended to use the Church to fulfil his ambitions and the opposition of the Medici was an obstacle he didn't need.

The Pazzi and Salviati were just two clans who were tiring of Medici omnipotence. Following a failed coup in 1468, the dynasty had further tightened its grip on power in Florence, and old families with the noble blood lacking on the Medici family tree found themselves assigned honorary roles with little consequence, while important political jobs went to Lorenzo and Giuliano's allies. Meanwhile, the Medici still enjoyed the popular support that had swept the family to dominance in the first place.

Lorenzo, later called 'the Magnificent', continued the family tradition of outward republicanism that shielded almost total despotism. He was renowned for his political skills as well as his love of learning. His brother, Giuliano, was four years his junior and


Lorenzo's flight to the new sacristy of Florence Cathedral saw him trapped, while the conspirators flooded Florence in an attempt to seize power from the Medici



Odoardo Borrani's 19th-century painting shows the gruesome fate of Jacopo de' Pazzi, whose body was mutilated on several occasions following his execution widely admired for his good looks, patronage of the arts and easy charm. The brothers showed all the cunning that had made the Medici into one of the most powerful dynasties in Europe.

Many details of the plot to end their rule came from the confession of a soldier, Giovan Battista, who also held the title of Count of Montesecco. Saved from immediate execution following the cathedral attacks that left Giuliano dead and Lorenzo injured, he later told all. His words, extracted under torture while he contemplated almost certain death, revealed just how far hatred of the Medici had spread among some of Florence's oldest families, and how the plot to remove them took shape in the heart of the papacy.

According to Montesecco, the conspiracy began in Rome in the rooms at the Vatican belonging to Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa. In the late summer of 1477, he was invited to talks there where Salviati, Francesco Pazzi and Girolamo Riario discussed the threat that the Medici posed to Imola and its new ruler, especially once Pope Sixtus IV was dead.

As talks continued throughout the early autumn, the plotters revealed their beliefs that the population of Florence was turning against the Medici. They also began working out how to get hold of the troops that they would need to bolster their move against Lorenzo and Giuliano. Montesecco was then sent to Florence to use his military knowledge to devise a plan of attack, as well as to try and talk Francesco's uncle, Jacopo de' Pazzi, into backing the plot.

Until then, the head of the Pazzi family had remained aloof from the idea, but his involvement was vital for the plot to succeed. In the end, he agreed to it, perhaps persuaded by Pope Sixtus IV's own acquiescence. A man of God, he couldn't sanction murder, but backed the conspirators' ideas that Lorenzo in particular should be removed from the government of Florence. With the words "as long as death does not come into it", Sixtus agreed to the plan, and the cabal spent the early part of 1478 working out exactly when they would make their move.

As the spring of 1478 got under way, rumours of an assassination attempt reached Lorenzo and Giuliano, who were always on guard for attacks anyway given their exalted status. In the months leading up to Easter Sunday, they made sure never to be at the same celebration together. They were expected to travel to Rome that year to mark Easter, and the plotters pinpointed that as a moment to strike, but at the last moment, the Medici stayed put. A week before the attack took place, they were both due at a meal at Lorenzo's villa in nearby Fiesole, but Giuliano decided not to go with hours to spare.

The plotters then engineered invitations for themselves to the Palazzo Medici on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, 26 April 1478. Lorenzo had agreed to entertain them when he heard how much Girolamo Riario wanted to see some of his latest art collections, and his doors would be thrown open after High Mass. But on the day itself, Giuliano once more proved elusive and his attendance at the meal wasn't guaranteed. The conspirators arrived unexpectedly at the Medici home while Lorenzo waited for them at the church. He returned to get them and walked into Mass alongside men who were planning his murder. Meanwhile, when it was discovered that Giuliano wasn't among the thousands attending the service, another party of plotters returned to invite him, with false friendship, to join them at the major celebration of the Church's year.

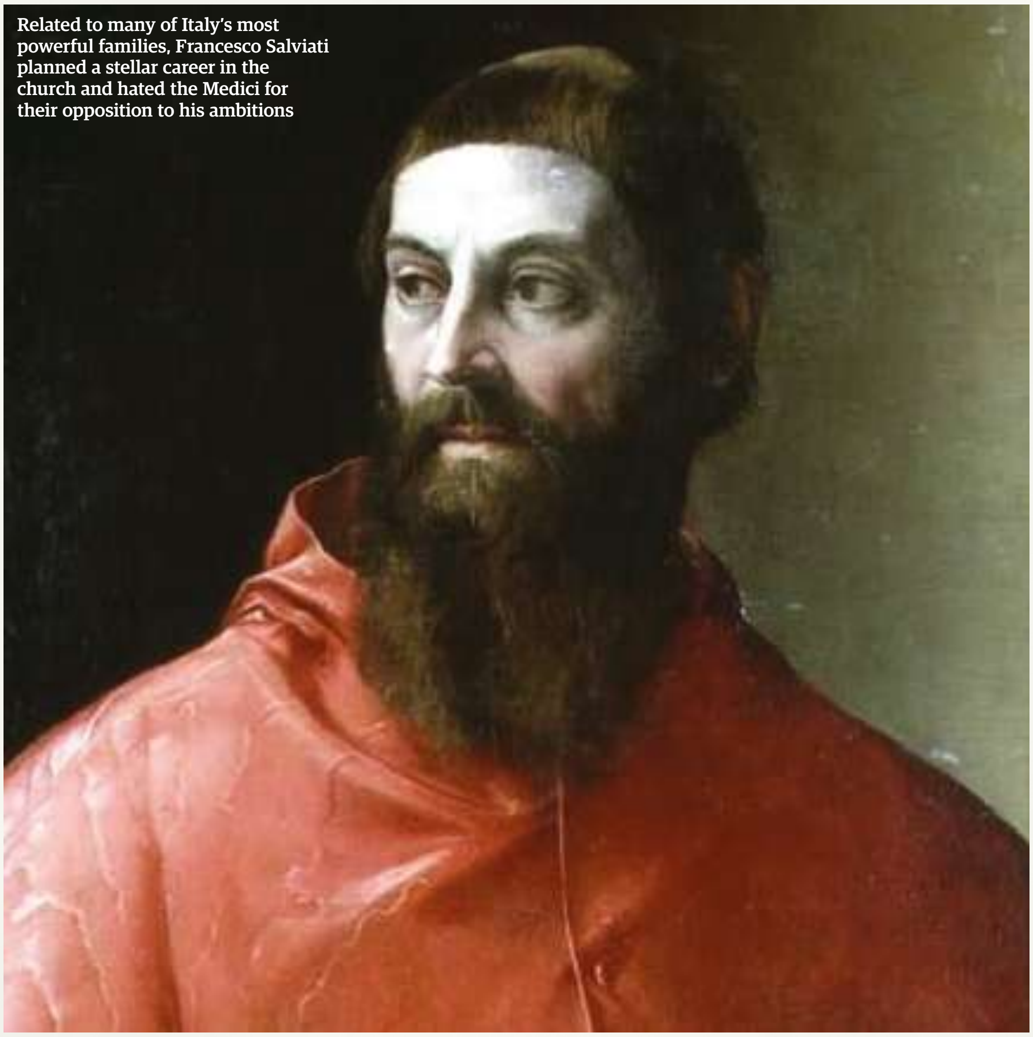
SALVS PVBLICA
A bronze medal made to commemorate the Pazzi conspiracy

The cool marble walls of Santa Maria del Fiore were packed as High Mass got under way, but Montesecco wasn't among the masses. He refused to spill blood in a church, and so his role as a Medici assassin was quickly ascribed to two priests who hid their weapons beneath their clerical robes. Antonio Maffei da Volterra and Ser Stefano da Bagnone were to deal with Lorenzo, while Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo Bandini Baroncelli, whose family had ties with the Pazzi, had been assigned the task of killing Giuliano.

Some reports said their cue was to be the closing words of the Mass, "Ite, missa est", while others said they had been primed to strike when the host was held aloft for all to see. But the anger of the Pazzi conspiracy finally caught up with Lorenzo and Giuliano Medici as communion got under way.

Giuliano, then aged 25 and betrothed in marriage, was struck by Baroncelli before Francesco de' Pazzi began a frenzied dagger attack. Stabbed between 12 and 19 times, a fatal blow was delivered to his head while his chest was punctured and he collapsed to the floor, dead. However, Lorenzo's would-be assassins weren't so skilled. One took hold of his shoulder to steady him for the assault and the victim had enough time to

> "HIS CHEST WAS PUNCTURED AND HE COLLAPSED TO THE FLOOR"


Related to many of Italy's most powerful families, Francesco Salviati planned a stellar career in the church and hated the Medici for their opposition to his ambitions

The Pazzi Chapel in Florence was an outward sign of the family's climb back to influence during the late-15th century

react. He sustained a cut to his neck but was able to fight back.

Once Baroncelli became aware of the botched assault on Lorenzo, he fought his way through the chaos then broke out to try and help his fellow murderers. But one of the Medici family's most loyal employees came to Lorenzo's defence. Francesco Noti stood between his boss and the killers and suffered a fatal blow to his stomach from Baroncelli. As thousands of people stampeded from the church, away from the attack, Lorenzo was spirited into the sacristy by Poliziano, a long-time friend of the Medici family. He hadn't seen the dead body of his brother.

He was also unaware that the plotters had military back-up waiting outside Florence while the other conspirators were about to attempt to seize control of government. Just as mayhem was breaking out in the Duomo, Francesco Salviati approached the Palazzo della Signoria in the company of armed men from Perugia, asking to see the Gonfaloniere of Justice. Salviati's job was to keep this high-ranking Florentine official talking while Jacopo de' Pazzi, with Francesco at his side, called for armed insurrection in the streets below. They would then take the Gonfaloniere into custody. But as Salviati began his audience with Cesare Petrucci, he realised things weren't going to plan.

Petrucci was alerted to the potential threat and, using the self-locking doors installed at the Signoria just for such occasions, he soon trapped Salviati and several of his fellow conspirators.

Meanwhile, Jacopo made the journey to the Piazza below alone. Francesco had managed to stab himself during his energetic attack on Giuliano and was being treated behind locked doors. With a band of mercenaries behind him, Jacopo approached the Signoria with the ancient call to revolt of "People and Liberty". However, the fightback had begun and Medici supporters hurled stones and weapons at the troops below.

The Palazzo Medici became a beacon for the fight against the coup. Lorenzo was finally brought back there by a heavily armed gang of supporters after a nerve-wracking wait behind the heavy brass doors of the cathedral's sacristy. Once the church had emptied, he and his supporters had heard hammering at the door and it was only after one of his closest friends, Sigismondo della Stufa, braved the ascent to the organ gallery to see who was at the entrance that the Medici faction made their escape. Soon, Florentines of all ranks rallied to their cause, and the well-prepared armoury in their family palazzo was emptied as men prepared themselves for battle.

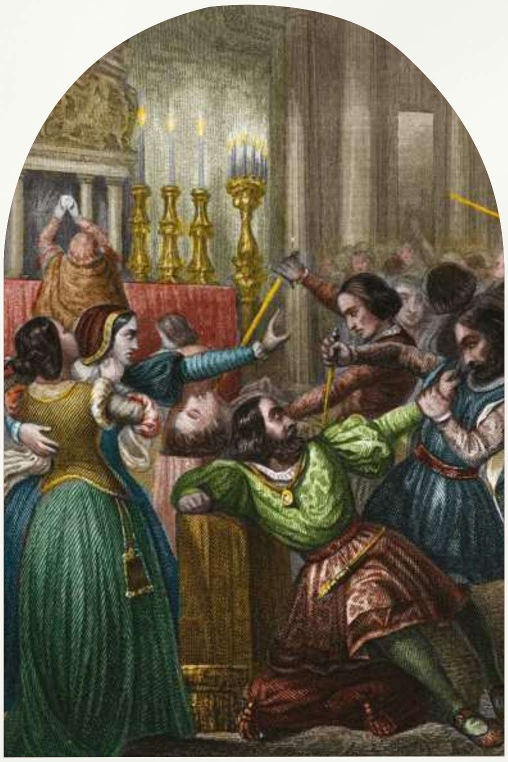
The spring air of that Easter morning was soon filled with a deluge of noise. The Signoria's bell began to ring the warning peal that Florence was in danger. This tone then spread through the neighbouring countryside, calling residents everywhere to arms. In the face of this swift fightback, the troops waiting in the fields to support the conspirators fled. Meanwhile, the Pazzi cries of "People and Liberty" were meeting louder shouts

"THE WELL-PREPARED ARMOURY WAS EMPTIED AS MEN PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR BATTLE"

of "Balle", a reference to the Medici crest. When the Perugian force finally made its way into the Signoria, the sound of breaking bodies was added to the melee.

Florence had no desire to see the coup succeed and those involved were swiftly punished. Many of the troops who had attempted to take the seat of government were hurled from its upper windows, smashing into the piazza below where Florentines began to take their revenge by hacking them to pieces. Jacopo de' Pazzi, Montesecco and their supporters fled but Salviati was trapped. He was soon joined by Francesco de' Pazzi, who was dragged to the Signoria that afternoon as his conspiracy fell apart. Both men were hanged from the building's windows along with other plotters. Meanwhile, other conspirators and supporters were hanged from the windows of the nearby Bargello, turning the heart of Florence into a brutal gallows. The ropes around their necks were later cut so that their dead bodies ended up broken on the Florentine streets they had sought to control.

Jacopo de' Pazzi was captured the following day and beaten before being dragged back to Florence, where he was hanged on 28 April. His body was later dug up, mutilated and pulled around the city. Montesecco was beheaded at the start of May.



The attacks on Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici took place at the high point of the holiest service of the Church's year

Around 80 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the failed conspiracy, but the Medici had long memories. In December 1479, Baroncelli was finally found and hauled back to the city where he, too, was hanged.

By then, Lorenzo was in full control of Florence once more. The Pazzis were severely punished, with their property forfeited and the family banned from high office. Their name was even struck from public registers. However, their great backer, Pope Sixtus, wasn't going to take defeat lightly. He turned a blind eye to the Pazzi conspirators going against his wishes and spilling blood and ignored the fact that they had committed murder in a consecrated church. Instead, he turned his wrath on the city of Florence for allowing a man of the cloth, Francesco Salviati, to be hanged. The fact he had been executed while still in his cleric's robes made the insult even sharper for the ambitious pope.

On 1 June 1478, he issued the bull excommunicating Lorenzo and three weeks later, he placed the city of Florence under interdict, preventing Mass being heard or communion given out. He seized the Medici Bank's assets in Rome and, as was usual, he called on the papacy's greatest defenders to right the wrong. The traditional protector of the papacy, King Ferrante I of Naples, was asked to attack the city that had done Sixtus so much wrong. Ferrante offered to leave Florence in peace if it expelled Lorenzo and exiled him forever, but the Signoria, packed with Medici supporters, refused.

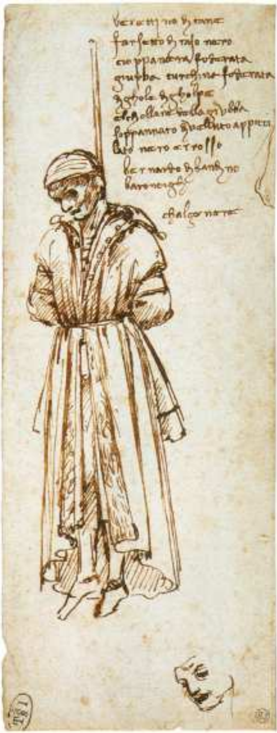
As the summer following the Pazzi conspiracy wore on, troops commanded by the duke of Urbino and Alfonso of Calabria neared the city, taking one important stronghold and damaging many surrounding fields, threatening the harvest. Eventually, Lorenzo offered to go to Naples himself to negotiate with Ferrante, a high-risk strategy. However, he was treated as an honoured guest and over the course of three months, managed to persuade Ferrante that Florence was a greater friend to Naples with the Medici still in charge.

When he returned, with the backing of Ferrante, to Florence, he quickly set about tightening his grip on power even further. He brought in new rules to ensure senators, nominated by him, served for life while his new council would have the ultimate say in all matters.

The Palazzo della Signoria and the piazza below, which had run with the blood of those who had dared to oppose him, now belonged completely to Lorenzo. He had survived the most dangerous plot yet to befall his family and done all he could to protect the Medici from further coups like the gory and frenzied Pazzi conspiracy.

THE REVENGE OF THE MEDICI

Lorenzo was still tracking down those responsible for the death of his brother Giuliano a decade after the Pazzi conspiracy had failed



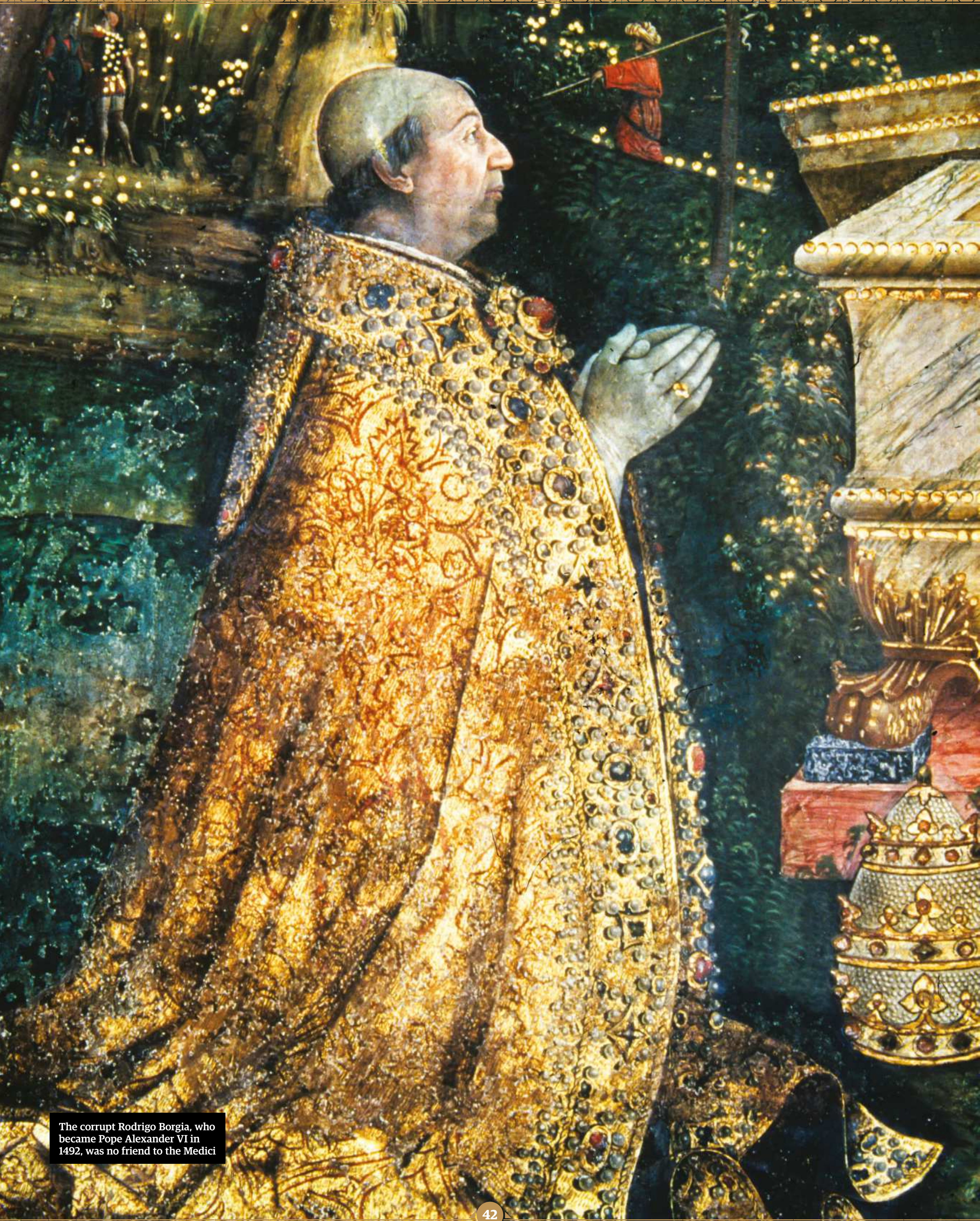
Leonardo da Vinci drew the execution of Giuliano de' Medici's killer, Baroncelli, in 1479, just days after Baroncelli was brought back to Florence and condemned to death without trial

Many of the main conspirators in the Pazzi plot were executed without trial. The dead body of Giuliano de' Medici and the storming of the Signoria were taken as enough evidence to produce a guilty verdict. Francesco Salviati and Francesco de' Pazzi were hanged within just hours of their crime.

Others, including the Count of Montesecco, were given a chance to confess, but more as a way of providing written evidence of their crimes than as an opportunity for them to be judged before the law.

However, dozens were executed within days of the Pazzi conspiracy unfolding and months afterwards, the Medici government had to make this appear just in all cases. And so the court of the Podesta announced in August 1478 that Jacopo de' Pazzi had confessed "without torture" following his capture the day after the coup. His testimony, never released, had implicated his whole family. Even the most dubious of the many executions was given legal standing by this ruling.

Ten years after the coup, summary justice was still being handed out. Girolamo Riario, one of the main conspirators and a man whose ambitions had led to the seeds of the conspiracy being sown, was hacked to death over 50 miles from Florence. His killers' first action was to tell Lorenzo, unaware that he had spent much of the past decade ensuring hatred against Riario grew until someone ended his life.



The corrupt Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI in 1492, was no friend to the Medici

MEDICI VS BORGIA

Throughout the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the Medici vied for influence in Rome with the notorious Borgia family

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

The Medici dominated Florentine politics for 300 years, but they were far from the only family to seek power in Italy. One of their greatest rivalries was with the Borgias - perhaps the most infamous family in history.

Unlike the Medici, with whom they shared very similar dynastic ambitions, the Borgias did not have their origins in Italy. The family first came to prominence in Aragon - one of the kingdoms that made up modern Spain - in the 13th century. They were ennobled in 1240 by Jaime I of Aragon, and by the late 14th century they were a prosperous Aragonese noble family.

They moved to an international stage with the career of Alfonso de Borja, who was born in 1378 and who pursued a career in the Church. He was known as a learned, honourable and trustworthy man and soon recognised to be on the path to great things. In 1429 he became bishop of Valencia, before becoming a cardinal in 1444 and moving to Rome. Following the nepotism that was widespread in the Holy See, he appointed his 14-year-old nephew, Rodrigo Borgia, as sacristan at the Valencia Cathedral in 1446. The younger Borgia continued to rise through the Church during the next few years, thanks to his uncle's position.

At the age of 18, Rodrigo joined his uncle at the Vatican, where he was given an excellent humanist education. He continued to flourish when his uncle, Cardinal Alfonso de Borja, was elected as Pope Callixtus III in 1455, serving as pontiff until his death three years later. In 1456 he appointed his nephews, Luis Juan de Milà and Rodrigo Borgia, as cardinals. The following year Rodrigo was appointed as vice chancellor of the Church - a highly lucrative and influential position.

The death of his uncle in 1458 failed to halt the rise of Rodrigo, who had become a prince of the Church. Rodrigo, who would grow enormously fat, was a flamboyant, larger-than-life figure, renowned for his wealth, charm and love of women. While a cardinal he fathered a large family, including six sons who all sought to use their father's influence to advance themselves.

The Medici were already a growing presence in Rome serving as papal bankers at the time of the Borgia family's arrival. While relatively new money themselves, they, along with many of the established Italian families, resented the growing prominence of the Spanish Borgias.

Lorenzo de' Medici had found favour with Pope Innocent VIII almost immediately after his election in 1484, making strenuous attempts to increase Medici influence in Rome. In 1487 he married his daughter Maddalena to the pope's son, Franceschetto Cibo, offering a dowry of 4,000 florins and paying a further 7,000 from the Rome branch of the Medici Bank to his son-in-law personally. In return, Lorenzo received significant benefits from Innocent, with the pontiff continuing to show him considerable favour. Less than two years later, in March 1489, the pope created Lorenzo's 13-year-old son Giovanni a cardinal. A month later, a grateful Lorenzo lent Innocent 100,000 ducats.

While the Medici were building influence in Rome, Rodrigo Borgia was also rising rapidly through the Church hierarchy. He had retained his position of vice chancellor of the Church after his uncle's death and was able to amass a great fortune through this, and his other offices.

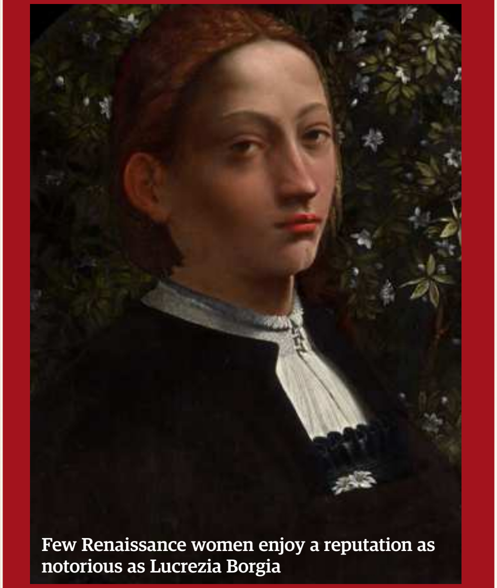
In spite of his holy vows, Rodrigo lived a notably unholy lifestyle, with one contemporary remarking that "beautiful women are attracted to him in a most remarkable way, more powerfully than iron is drawn to the magnet". He was a man of voracious sexual appetites, with Pope Pius II once writing to him to complain of reports of his involvement in an orgy. "I should," the pontiff lamented, "blush to record all that I have been told."

Rodrigo also kept several long-term mistresses, including Vannozza dei Cattanei, who bore him four illegitimate children - all of whom the cardinal acknowledged. He was also the father of children born to other mistresses, many of whom he attempted to advance to prominent positions. During much of his later life, a young noblewoman, Giulia Farnese, served as his main mistress. Her brother would later become Pope Paul III, having been created a cardinal by his sister's lover.

Rodrigo spent lavishly too, with his palace in Rome renowned as the most splendid of

THE POPE'S DAUGHTER

Lucrezia Borgia remains a notorious figure, tarnished by her position as the child of an unholy pontiff

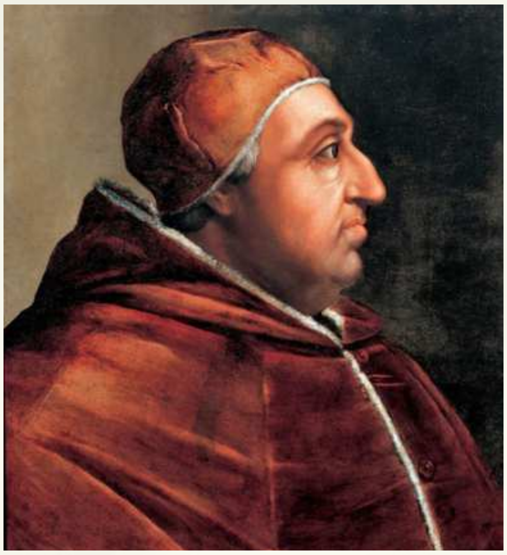

Few Renaissance women enjoy a reputation as notorious as Lucrezia Borgia

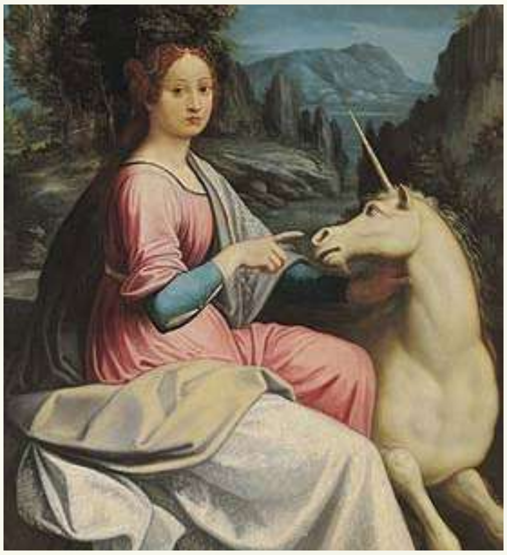
Lucrezia Borgia was only 12 years old when her father, Rodrigo Borgia, became pope. Although illegitimate, her father acknowledged her and sought to build an advantageous alliance through her marriage. As a result, she was married in 1493 to Giovanni Sforza, before the young man fled after quarrelling with Lucrezia's father and brother, Cesare. He later spread rumours that Lucrezia was her father's lover, and their marriage was annulled in 1497.

Lucrezia's next marriage was to Alfonso of Aragon, Duke of Bisceglie. While initially happy, this match also floundered when Alfonso quarrelled with Cesare. Lucrezia's brother had her husband murdered in Rome in 1500. In the period after the murder Lucrezia reputedly attended an orgy in the Vatican with her father and brother in which 50 naked prostitutes were invited.

Her final husband was Alfonso d'Este, son of the duke of Ferrara. Lucrezia's third husband had initially been wary of allying himself with the unsavoury Borgias, but he escaped the connection unscathed. After her father's death in 1503, Lucrezia's political role came to an end. She died in 1519, aged 39.

Lucrezia was the subject of considerable rumours in her lifetime. Many contemporaries believed that she had committed incest and was the mother of an illegitimate child, as well as giving credence to claims that she was a poisoner and had been involved in the murder of her husband. Although largely a pawn in the ambitions of her father and brother, she remains an infamous figure today.


More famous for his worldly lifestyle than his devotion to the Church, Alexander VI sought to promote the Borgias

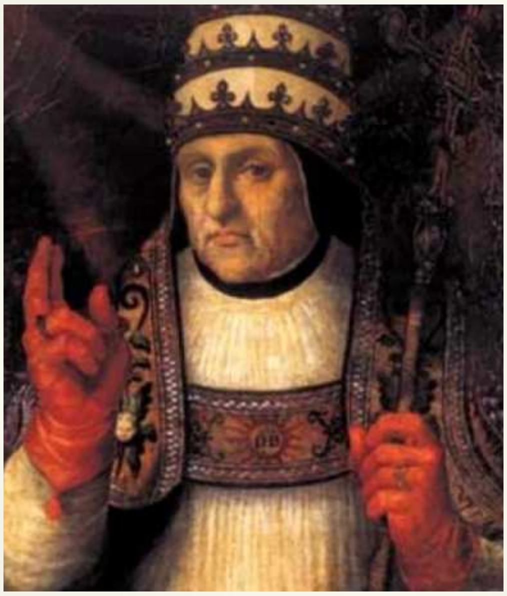

Giulia Farnese served as Pope Alexander VI's mistress, using her influence to make her brother a cardinal

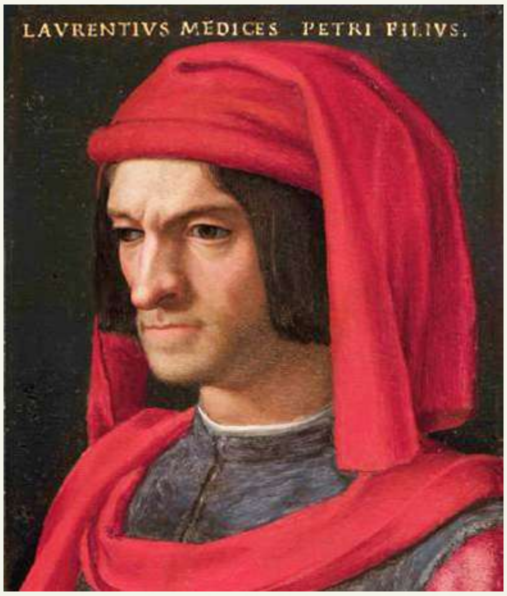
the cardinals' residences, filled with expensive tapestries and lavish furniture, while he employed around 200 servants, all wearing his livery. For all his worldly lifestyle, however, he was also recognised within the Church hierarchy as a man of great intelligence and ability.

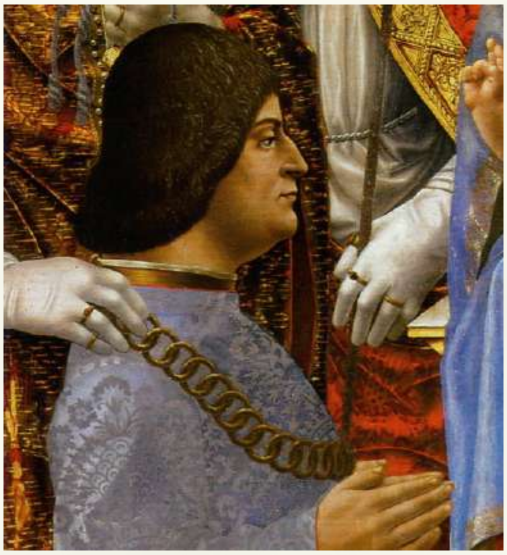
While the years of Innocent VIII's pontificate had been good for the Medici, corruption and disorder increased dramatically under the ineffectual pope. He was little mourned when he died in July 1492, with his cardinals in agreement that his successor should be a stronger character. After more than four days of deadlock, the new pope was announced on 11 August 1492, with Rodrigo Borgia, who had decided to take the name Alexander VI, observed excitedly shouting "I am pope! I am pope!" from a window in the Vatican.

As a Spaniard, Rodrigo was a surprising choice as pontiff, with most of them being of Italian origin. He was rumoured to have purchased the papacy through offering extensive bribes to the assembled cardinals, although he did not win the support of

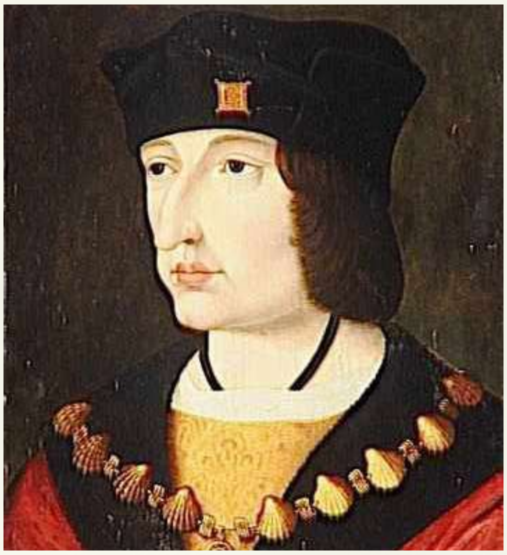
> "CORRUPTION AND DISORDER INCREASED DRAMATICALLY UNDER THE INEFFECTUAL POPE"


The first Borgia pope, Callixtus III, used his influence to advance his family in Rome

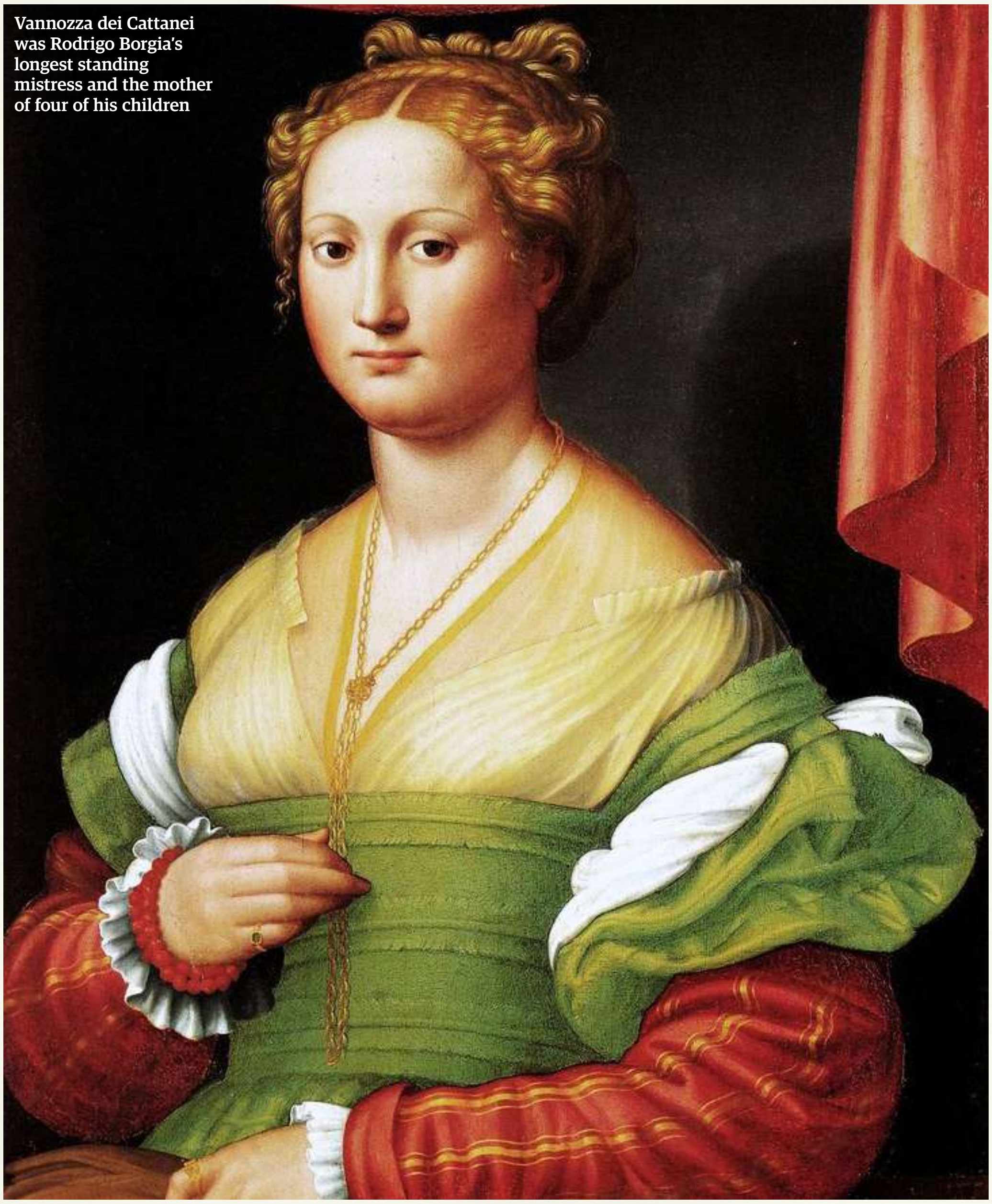

LAVRENTIVS MEDICES PETRI FILIVS.
Lorenzo de' Medici spent huge sums on befriending Pope Innocent VIII and increasing his influence in Rome



Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan, was initially favoured by Pope Alexander VI at the Medici family's expense



Charles VIII of France, whose claims to the throne of Naples sparked war in Italy



Vannozza dei Cattanei was Rodrigo Borgia's longest standing mistress and the mother of four of his children

everyone assembled. Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, for one, who would later become Pope Leo X, was dismayed at the election, declaring that "now we are in the power of a wolf, the most rapacious perhaps that this world has ever seen. And if we do not flee, he will inevitably devour us all". This view would mark the character of the relationship between the Medici and Borgia families throughout Alexander VI's pontificate.

Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici had not been one of the cardinals to accept the new pope's bribes, having been ordered by his brother Piero to support Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the leader of a pro-Naples faction in the conclave. Rodrigo's election was a disaster for the Borgia family, undoing all they had done in building a strong relationship with Pope Innocent.

Although Piero personally arrived in Rome to congratulate the new pope, at the head of a Florentine embassy, it was clear that Alexander VI would not offer the same favour that his predecessor had done. The following year the pope married his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, to Giovanni Sforza, a cousin of Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan, who was Piero's greatest enemy. The relationship was further complicated by the fact that Piero was married to Alfonsina Orsini, a daughter of a Roman noble house at odds with the new pope.

In September 1493, Pope Alexander took the decision to create an unprecedented 13 new cardinals in order to ensure that he had the support of the College of Cardinals in Rome. One of his new cardinals was his 18-year-old son Cesare, with the Medici ally Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere observed "to howl with rage" at the news. Cesare, who would later resign his cardinal's hat to become a soldier and politician, was uniquely unsuited to the role even in a period when the standards of Church appointees were not high. Alexander, however, merely resolved to "show them who was pope" when told of the opposition.

The political situation in Italy was growing increasingly unstable in the late 15th century, with Piero's alliance with Naples looking increasingly shaky. Charles VIII of France considered himself the rightful king of Naples and, by the end of 1493, had announced his intention to reconquer the kingdom. Ludovico Sforza openly supported the French, while the Borgia pope also looked likely to aid their campaign. Piero, too, was beset by troubles in Florence, where his alliance with Naples was highly unpopular.

In August 1494 he caused anger in Florence when he refused the French king's request to grant his army safe conduct on their way to Naples. Charles responded by expelling Florentine merchants from France, while rumours of war in Florence began to increase. After again refusing a request for safe conduct in October, Piero went in person to the French army to negotiate with the king, surrendering Pisa and other Florentine territories in order to make peace.

In November 1494, Piero, Cardinal Giovanni and other members of the Medici family were exiled

ALFONSVS FERD
DVX CALABRIE

Alfonso II, whose claims to the kingdom of Naples were initially supported by Pope Alexander VI

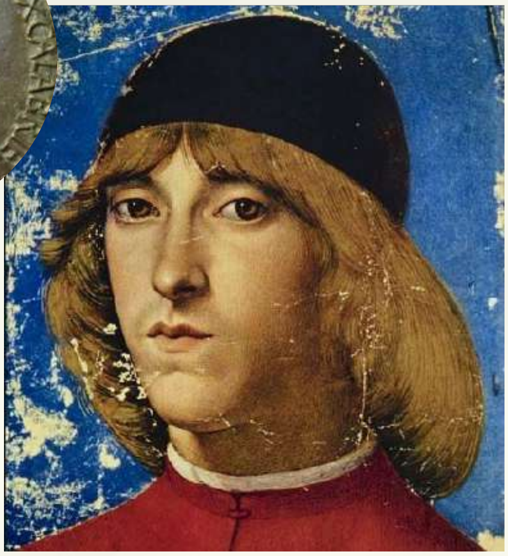
from the city by members of the Signoria, as crowds cried out "The People! Liberty!" Charles VIII entered the city on 17 November, accompanied by 11,000 troops and was met with a warm welcome. The king soon signed a treaty with Florence's new government, requiring Piero and his brothers to remain at least 160 kilometres from Florence.

Unlike Piero, Alexander VI played a more nuanced game, at first seeking to remain on friendly terms with both Naples and France, before finally announcing his support of Alfonso II of Naples, who had succeeded his father, Ferrante I, in 1494. In return for agreeing to the new king's coronation, Alexander received rich gifts for his children, while his 12-year-old son, Gioffre, was married to King Alfonso's illegitimate daughter, Sancia of Aragon.

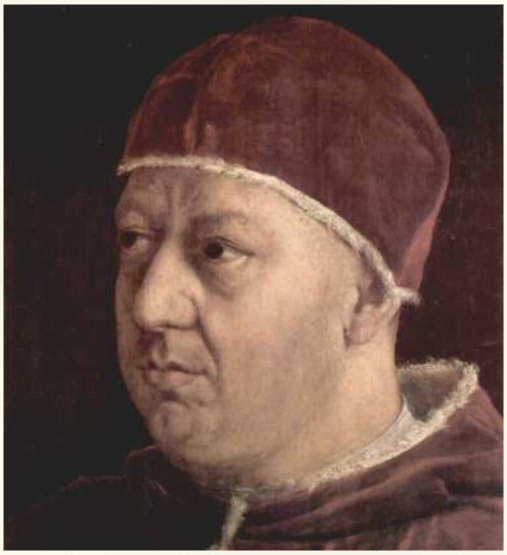
This alliance proved disastrous for Alexander as French troops approached Rome. Amid calls for him to flee, the pope made his peace with the French king, signing a peace treaty on 25 January 1495. Alfonso abdicated the next day and the French captured the kingdom one month later. Alexander's support had been gained for the French under considerable duress and in March 1495 he made an alliance with Venice, Milan, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire with the aim of expelling the French from Italy. By November they had been forced out of Naples. During most of 1494 and 1495, Alexander's political manoeuvrings were concerned with the safeguarding of his own position, but he soon turned his attentions back to Florence, where a theocratic government had been established under the radical Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola.

Savonarola remained loyal to France, as did most Florentines. As a result, for the first time, the Medici found themselves seeking the same political aims as Pope Alexander, although they didn't combine their efforts. In April 1497, Piero arrived at Florence at the head of 2,000 troops but he wasn't met with the popular uprising that he had anticipated, in spite of Savonarola's unpopular and austere rule. He was soon alarmed, too, to hear that his enemy Ludovico Sforza was lobbying for a new rule in Florence under the governance of Piero's cousins, Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, who were related to him by marriage.

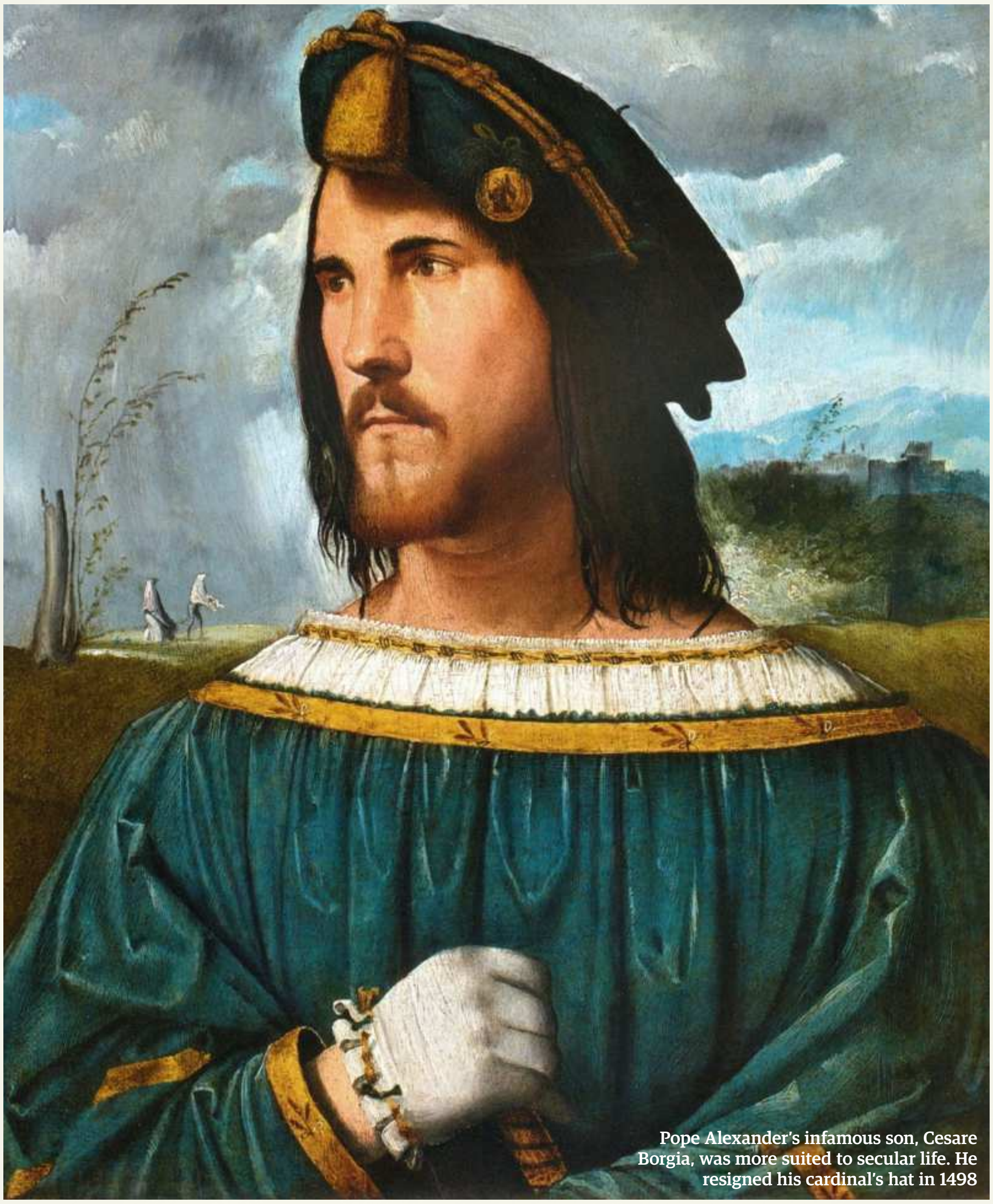
Alexander, too, was making his own efforts to remove Savonarola, excommunicating the friar in May 1497. He also applied pressure to the city's Signoria, threatening to place Florence under an interdict if they did not remove the leader. This was a serious threat and it had the desired effect, with Savonarola arrested on 8 April 1498, tried, and then hanged and burned on 23 May. While Alexander had taken the initiative, he did not do so to benefit Piero, who remained exiled from Florence.



Piero de' Medici lacked political acumen and was expelled from Florence after being humbled by the French



Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X in 1513, leading to an upswing in Medici fortunes



Pope Alexander's infamous son, Cesare Borgia, was more suited to secular life. He resigned his cardinal's hat in 1498

Holliday Grainger and François Arnaud depicting the close relationship between Lucrezia and Cesare Borgia in Showtime's The Borgias.

TELEVISION STARS

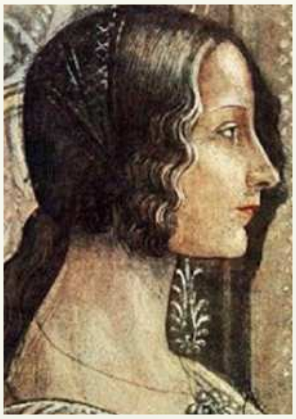
The Medici and Borgia families continue to fascinate, with a number of television shows depicting them

The Medici and Borgia families lived lives of high drama that have proved irresistible to television audiences today. In 2011, Showtime's *The Borgias* premiered, with the programme running for three seasons. Starring Jeremy Irons as Pope Alexander VI, François Arnaud as Cesare Borgia and Holliday Grainger as Lucrezia Borgia, it drew large audiences with a plot full of intrigue, violence and sexual immorality. Although planned to run for four seasons, the show was cancelled in 2013.

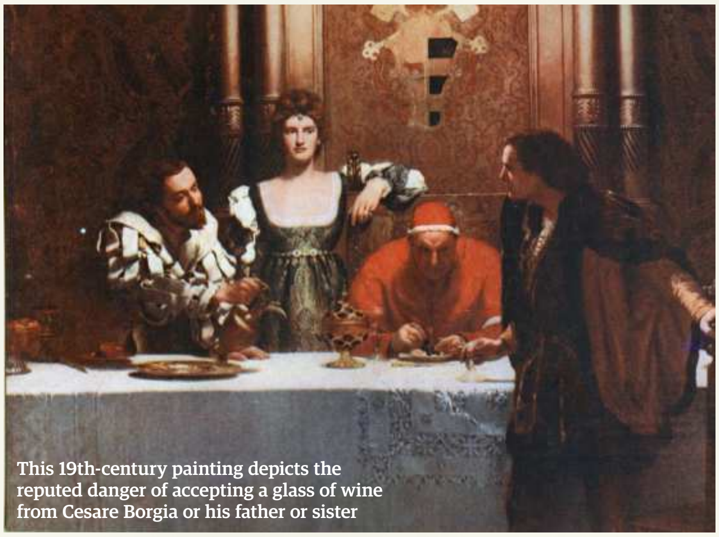
A second series on the Borgia family, *Borgia*, debuted on Netflix in 2011 and also ran for three seasons. This series, which starred John Doman as Alexander VI and Mark Ryder as Cesare, was an international production, employing actors from across Europe. It too explored the family's political intrigues, as well as the rumoured incestuous relationship between Lucrezia and her brother, as well as the birth of Lucrezia's illegitimate child.

The Medici have also been the subject of a more recent television production. *Medici: Masters of Florence* premiered in 2016, starring Dustin Hoffman as Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, the founder of the Medici Bank. A second series, *Medici: The Magnificent* starred Sean Bean. Both series, which detail the family's history in the 15th century, are thrillers, with the first season focusing on Giovanni's murder. A third season has also been ordered.

The Borgia and the Medici families provide rich source material for screenwriters, with audiences captivated by the intrigue and glamour of their lives. While most depictions take considerable liberties with the truth, they provide an entertaining window into the lives of these influential families.



Sancia of Aragon, whose marriage to Gioffre Borgia persuaded her father-in-law, Pope Alexander, to support her father, Alfonso II of Naples



This 19th-century painting depicts the reputed danger of accepting a glass of wine from Cesare Borgia or his father or sister

The Medici finally joined with the Borgia pope in the autumn of 1498 when Alexander offered his support of the new French king, Louis XII's invasion of Italy, in return for French aid in creating a new state for his son, Cesare, in northern Italy. Louis XII, who claimed to be duke of Milan, took the duchy on 1 September 1499, causing Ludovico Sforza to flee. Piero, who was still hoping to return to Florence, joined Cesare Borgia's troops, who were assisted by 6,000 French mercenaries. In return for his assistance, Cesare promised to invade Florence on Piero's behalf once his own campaigns were completed. He hoped that by re-establishing the Medici, he could ensure that Tuscany was an ally to his own new territories.

Cesare, who was riddled with syphilis and enjoyed a sinister reputation, was also a successful soldier, having abandoned his cardinal's hat to become a secular prince. His army entered Florentine territory in May 1500 and, in response to his attacks on the countryside, the Signoria agreed to negotiate. While they refused absolutely to countenance the return of the Medici, Cesare was satisfied with a payment of 36,000 florins to persuade his army to leave.

He invaded again at Piero's urging in June 1502, capturing the Florentine city of Arezzo. With Borgia's army fighting under the name of the Medici, they continued to take Florentine towns, only to be halted by the intervention of the French on behalf of the Signoria. Alarmed, the city authorities recognised that, although the Medici could command little loyalty for their own sake, they were prominent enough "to be a useful instrument which our powerful enemies could use to flog us". The tenuous nature of the relationship between the Borgias and the Medici was also underlined in June 1503 when Alexander VI made Francesco Soderini, the brother of the current ruler of Florence, a cardinal.

Pope Alexander VI died suddenly on 18 August 1503, causing a dramatic downturn in the Borgia family's fortunes. His death was followed on 27 December 1503 when Piero drowned after falling in a river. With his brother's death, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici became the de facto head of the family, immediately attempting to build up influence in Rome. By 1513 the fortunes of the two families had enjoyed a remarkable turnaround, with Cardinal Giovanni elected as pope. After taking the name Leo X, he famously declared that "God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it". It was now he who was in a position to offer favours - or not - to the Borgias. In 1519 he appointed the nine-year-old son of Lucrezia Borgia as archbishop of Milan in exchange for a golden vase worth 600 ducats.

Thanks to the influence of Pope Leo X, the Medici were once again able to re-establish themselves as the rulers of Florence. Their rivals, the Borgias, on the other hand, were all but extinct. Cesare had died fighting in 1507, with the state he had created already in ruins. It was to be the Medici who would triumph in the long-running rivalry between the two families.

PRINCELY BANKERS

The Medici fortune was built on banking, but within a few brief years their business – and prosperity – was swept away

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

The Medici owed their fortune to finance, with the earliest known family members plying their trade at moneylending. It was in the banking business that they made their name, with the Medici Bank's rise being as meteoric as its dramatic fall.

By the early 13th century, Florence was established as a leading centre of credit in Europe, although it took the Medici some time to enter the banking trade themselves. By 1300, the family were listed as members of Florence's bankers' guild, with their offices in the Old Market, close to their palace. While their operations were initially small in scale, their wealth was to grow sharply throughout the early 14th century. The Medici were soon trading across Italy.

Throughout the 14th century, family members established separate banking companies, although these were all interlinked through their family relationship and the support they offered each other. Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, who was born in 1360, received little wealth when his father died. However, he was able to establish himself in the family business thanks to the support of his kinsman, Vieri de' Medici. At first, he was based in Rome, where he became branch manager, managing the deposits made by the Catholic Church. He also remained in close contact with the other Medici branches, including those held by his brother, Francesco, across Italy. In 1397 Giovanni moved his headquarters back to Florence, registering his new bank with the bankers' guild that April. This is usually credited as the founding of the Medici Bank.

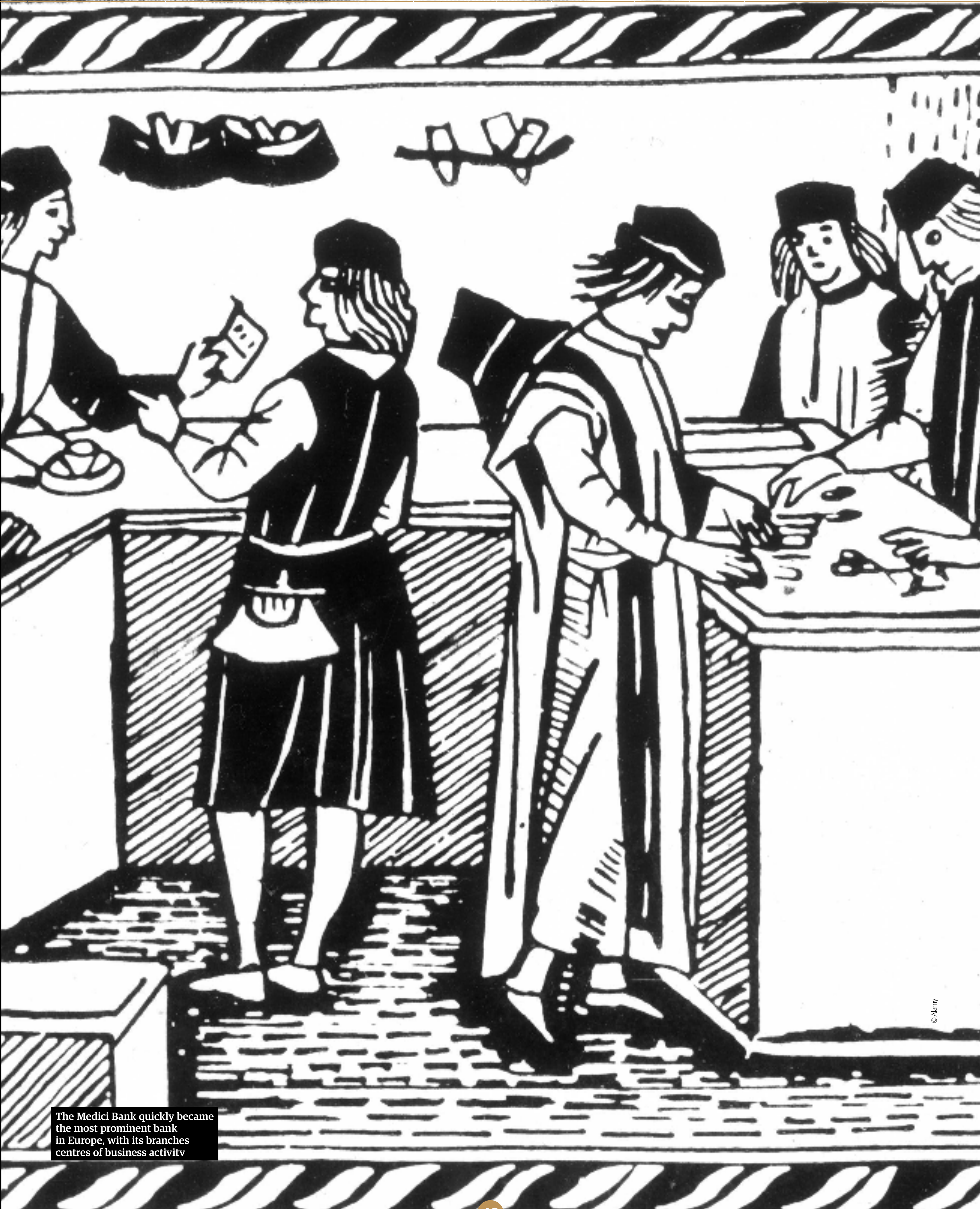
Giovanni's bank was, at first, modest. He provided 6,000 florins towards the initial capital, while his associate, Benedetto de' Bardi, provided the remaining 2,000 florins. The two men agreed to split the bank's profits in the same proportions, with Bardi remaining in Rome to manage the branch at the papal court. They were initially only moderately successful, making a net profit of 1,200 florins in the first 18 months. By the turn of the century, the Medici Bank had three branches, in Florence, Rome and Naples, while it employed 13 people. In 1402 a fourth branch was opened in Venice. It was soon to grow to become the richest bank in Italy.

The Medici Bank had diverse interests, with their partnership agreements setting out that the purpose of their various branches was "to deal in exchange and in merchandise with the help of God and good fortune". The Medici were merchant bankers, heavily involved in international trade. In 1402, Giovanni purchased a woollen cloth factory in Florence and soon after added another to his family's interests.

The bank's branches also dealt heavily in the purchase and sale of luxury goods. Later in the 15th century, for example, a Medici branch manager at Bruges would be instructed to purchase tapestries and horses that could be sold in Italy for a profit, as well as to seek out valuable manuscripts in the local monasteries and boy sopranos for the papal choir. Cloth, too, was purchased from markets in the Netherlands and England for export to Italy. Commodities could also be purchased on behalf of clients or other Medici Bank branches, who would bear the risk. In 1441, the Venetian branch of the bank purchased ginger for the Bruges branch of the bank, something that the Bruges manager hoped could be traded on for profit.

The Medici branches also accepted deposits from clients, which would be held for a specified period of time and upon which interest would be paid. These tended to be deposited by prominent individuals, who were attracted to the high rate of return offered and the ability to secure wealth away from the grasp of their local prince. Medici clients included high-ranking Italian families and those from further afield, such as prominent officials at the royal courts of France and Burgundy, something which helped ensure the Medici family enjoyed considerable political influence.

Moneylending, too, was a major source of profit, with significant sums lent to high-ranking churchmen and princes in the period. They were high-risk investments, since a large number were never paid back. However, they also helped to



The Medici Bank quickly became the most prominent bank in Europe, with its branches centres of business activity

© Alamy

cement lasting relationships between the Medici and church and political leaders in the period, ensuring that the family enjoyed considerable political influence.

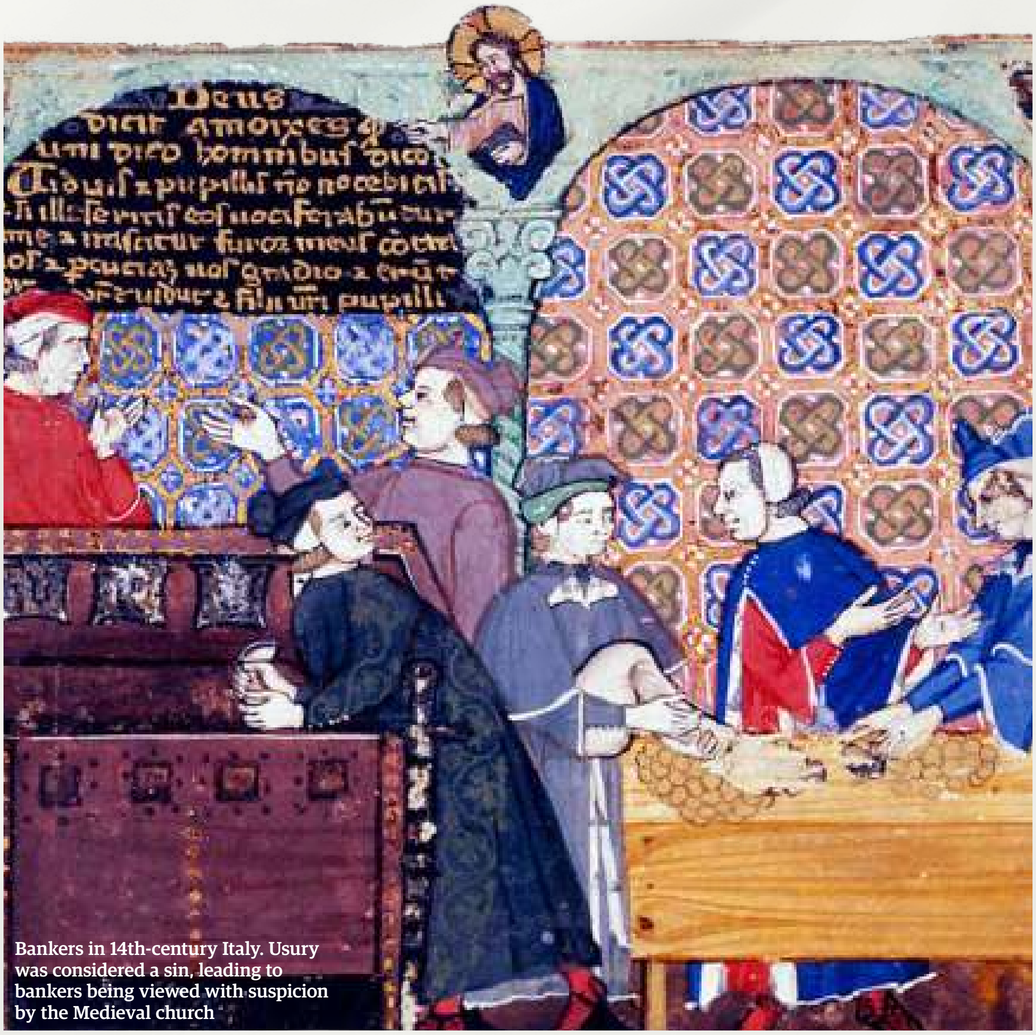
Giovanni had a talent for recognising people who were likely to rise through the Church, enjoying an early friendship with Baldassare Cossa, who had been appointed as papal treasurer in 1389. This worldly Neapolitan nobleman and former pirate was made a cardinal in 1402 after paying 10,000 florins to the pope from money loaned to him by the Medici Bank. This was to prove a phenomenal investment for both men. Cossa was appointed as papal governor of Bologna in 1403, with Giovanni soon joining him there as the pope's ambassador to the city. The careers of both men remained intertwined, with Giovanni making a loan of nearly 9,000 florins to the cardinal in 1404.

It was a troubled time for the papacy, with three rival popes all vying for power in 1409. In 1410 Cossa himself was chosen as pope in Bologna, taking the name John XXIII. Giovanni's bank was the new pope's main financial backer, with John XXIII securing the enormous debts with valuable plate and other property of the papacy. Even John's deposition from his position as pope in 1415 by the Council of Constance and the loss of the lucrative role as papal banker did not harm the family's fortunes. The Medici Bank had grown enormously wealthy and had become one of the leading banking houses in Florence. Between 1397 and 1420, Giovanni's personal share of the profits totalled more than 113,000 florins.

Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici kept a close eye on his bank, with his energy and talent considered legendary. He was a good judge of character, rarely making mistakes in the men he chose to run his branches. Even when mistakes occurred, they were quickly rectified. When the first manager of the Venetian branch, Neri Tornaquinci, was found to have breached his contract with Giovanni to make large unsecured loans and to have then falsified the bank's accounts, he was quickly removed from his post.

Giovanni's business partner, Benedetto de' Bardi, died in 1420, ending their partnership agreement. This gave Giovanni the chance to reorganise the bank, with his sons, Cosimo and Lorenzo formally brought into the partnership. Giovanni remained firmly in control, however, with the bank appointed once again as papal bankers later that year.

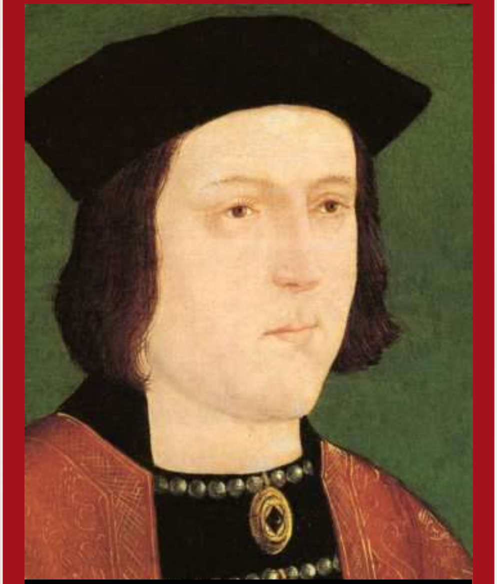
Giovanni died on 20 February 1429, at the then advanced age of 69. Thanks to his success in banking, he died as one of Florence's most prosperous and prominent citizens with his bank



Bankers in 14th-century Italy. Usury was considered a sin, leading to bankers being viewed with suspicion by the Medieval church

ENGLAND AND THE MEDICI BANK

Spiralling loans to Edward IV meant that the bank's London branch soon became a major liability



Edward IV won the English crown in battle, but needed huge sums of money to retain his throne

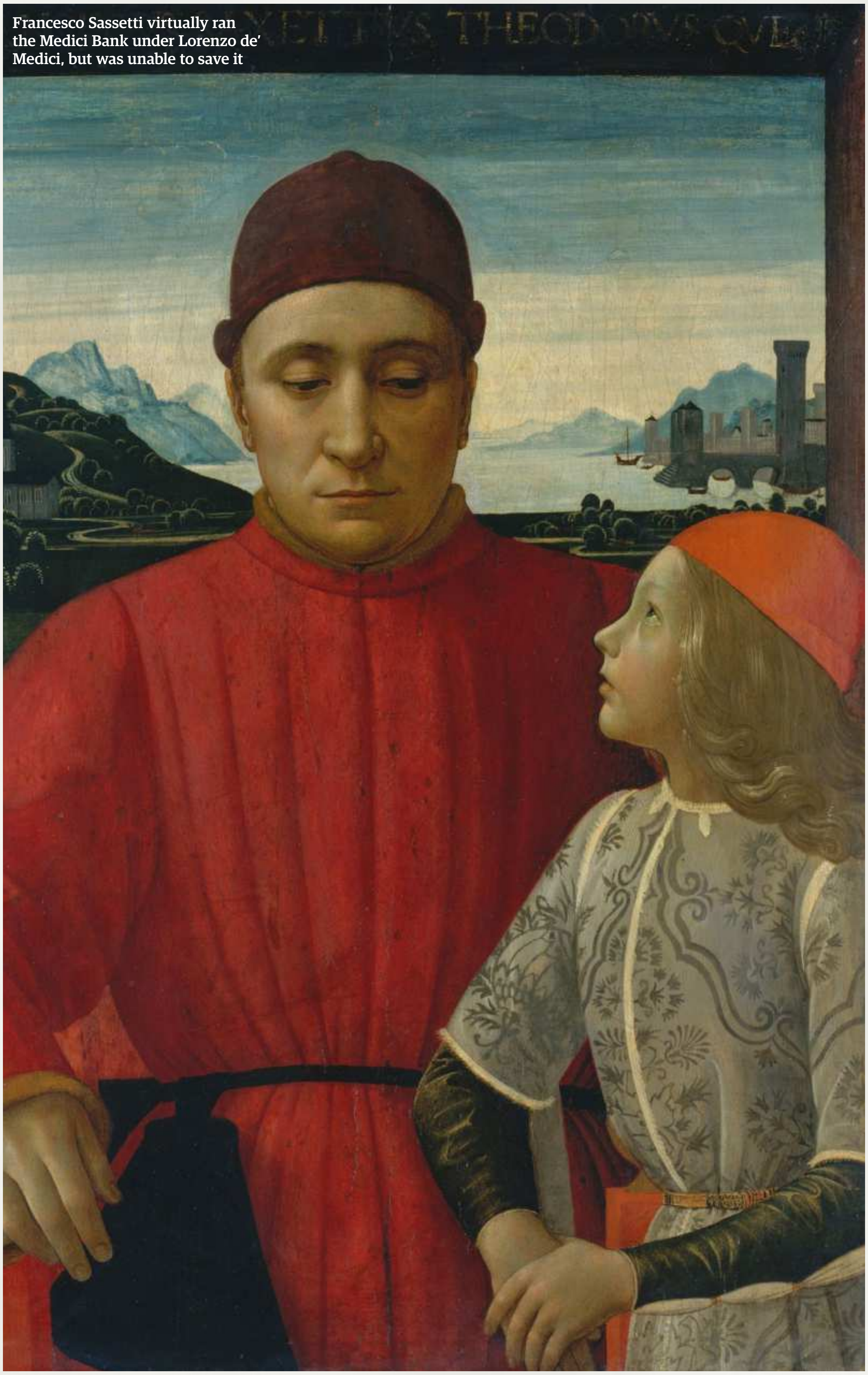
The Medici founded a London branch of the Medici Bank during the first half of the 15th century, with a Florentine merchant, Gherardo Canigiani, employed there from 1446. In 1465 he became branch manager, contributing £300 of capital to the partnership.

By now, Canigiani had already made several loans to the English king, Edward IV, and the two enjoyed a close relationship. Edward, who had seized the crown from the Lancastrian king Henry VI in 1461, was always in dire need of money, as were much of his nobility, who also borrowed from Canigiani.

The borrowing increased dramatically in size and frequency after Canigiani became branch manager, with loans to the king totalling over £26,000 made between 1466 and 1471. Although some of these loans were repaid, the Medici became increasingly concerned about the amount of Edward's borrowing, with Angelo Tani sent to investigate in 1468. Amidst increasing concern, Lorenzo de' Medici sent another agent to London in 1472, before removing Canigiani as manager the following year.

The continuing instability of the English crown made full repayment impossible. In 1470 Edward IV briefly lost his crown with the reinstatement of Henry VI, whose supporters also owed the Medici money. Canigiani was credited by the diplomat, Philippe de Commines, with being the man "who kept King Edward IV upon his throne, almost upon his own credit", but this was little consolation for the Medici family. By 1478 Lorenzo de' Medici had made losses in the London branch of approximately £14,000: an enormous sum of money.

“INVESTMENT ENSURED THE FAMILY ENJOYED CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL INFLUENCE”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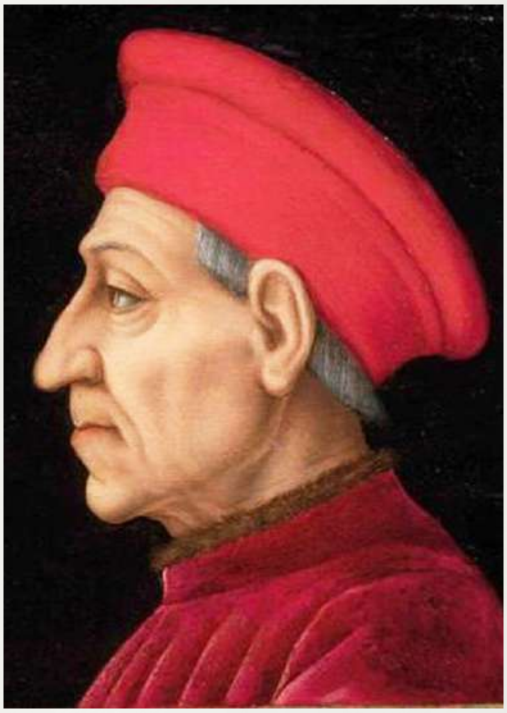
Francesco Sassetti virtually ran the Medici Bank under Lorenzo de' Medici, but was unable to save it

reporting profits of more than 186,000 florins in the 15 years between 1420 and 1435. While his interests were still centred on Italy, his son, Cosimo, was to turn the Medici Bank into an international power, carefully controlled from its headquarters in the Palazzo Medici.

Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici was already approaching 40 at his father's death and had been well schooled in the banking business. He inherited control of the bank's Italian branches, with that of Rome - thanks to the papal account - remaining the most lucrative. Under his rule, the bank rapidly began to expand further, opening branches in Pisa, Milan, Geneva (moving to Lyons in 1466), Basel, Avignon, Bruges and even distant London. If a city did not have a branch of the Medici Bank, the family's interests were represented by their agents who would carry out business on their behalf and on behalf of their clients.

Although all the various branches traded under the Medici name, they were not, in fact, all run as a company. Branches were separate partnerships, but the Medici were always in control, retaining rights to the name and the ability to terminate the partnership of others. By 1458, Cosimo was listed as a partner in 11 different partnerships, including the main Florence branch of the bank, various cloth manufacturing concerns and the other Medici branches scattered across Italy and Northern Europe. Only the branch at the papal court was not listed, since that was held by his sons, who still operated under the authority of their father. Partnerships, which would be dissolved and reconstituted every time a branch manager changed, were highly changeable, making it difficult to untangle the complex web of branch ownership in the period.



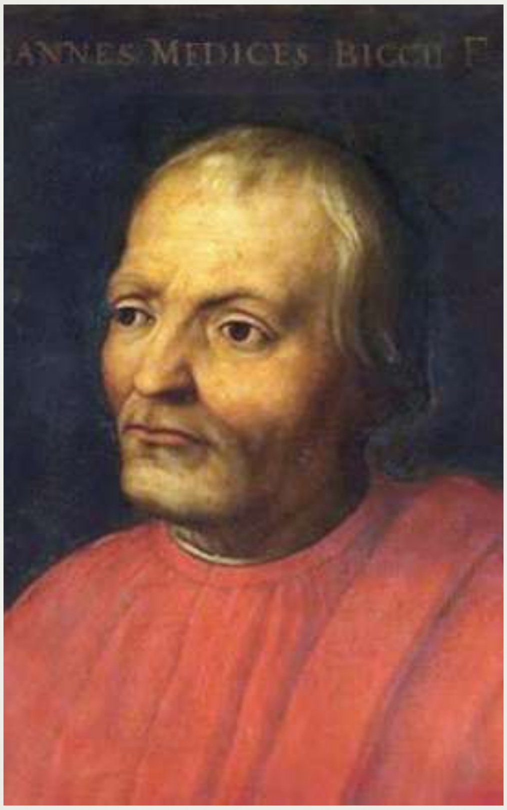
Cosimo de' Medici took control of the bank on his father's death in 1429, expanding its reach across Europe

“UNDER COSIMO’S RULE, THE BANK RAPIDLY BEGAN TO EXPAND FURTHER”

Branch managers exercised a good deal of control over their institutions, since the Medici could not hope to oversee everything. Instead, Cosimo set out the rules of his branches, made the important decisions and, crucially, selected the bank managers themselves. All such managers were partners in their particular branch, although the partnership agreements themselves were highly unequal. The Medici, as the senior partners, retained all the power, while their junior partners assumed the responsibility for running the branches. All their actions were subject to the agreement of the Medici, while the partnership agreements could be terminated if the managers displeased them. Due to the importance of the role, promotion to manager tended to come from those who had already proved themselves within the bank. Tommaso Portinari, for example, had already served for 25 years before he became manager of the Bruges branch at around the age of 40. The main branch at Florence attempted to keep a close eye on the other branches, with managers visiting Florence every two or three years to receive instructions and report on business.

The managers’ duties and the restrictions on their power were set out in articles of association, entered into when a new partnership was established. Cosimo, as head of the family, was not always a party to these agreements, although it was unofficially acknowledged that the real power lay in him. In 1455, for example, when a new manager was appointed to the Bruges branch, Cosimo’s two sons and his nephew stood as partners representing the Medici interest, while the outgoing branch manager and the new manager were also parties. Angelo Tani, the new manager, was to be given control of the branch for four years, with it set out that the purpose of the company was to trade “in exchange and merchandise in the city of Bruges in Flanders”.

The company was to trade under the names of both the Medici and Gierozzo de’ Pigli, the outgoing manager who directly reported to Cosimo, while the Medici supplied more than half of the 3,000 groat capital. In return, the Medici were to receive 60 per cent of the profit, with the remaining 40 per cent divided equally between the outgoing and incoming managers. This worked in Tani’s favour, since he had only supplied 15 per cent of the capital, and was an acknowledgement of



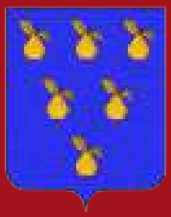
Giovanni di Bicci de’ Medici, who founded the Medici Bank in 1397

PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES

The Medici were not the only Florentine family to risk everything in the high stakes world of finance

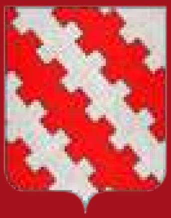
THE BARDI FAMILY

The Bardi were leading Florentine merchants and international bankers in the 13th and 14th centuries. Along with the Peruzzi family, they loaned over a million florins to Edward III of England, to finance his French wars. When Edward defaulted on the loans in 1345, the Bardi family were bankrupted.



THE PERUZZI FAMILY

The Peruzzi family, too, were badly exposed by the large loans they made to Edward III of England to fund his war with France. Although a major Florentine political family, their bank collapsed following Edward’s default and the default of the King of Naples. They became bankrupt in 1343.

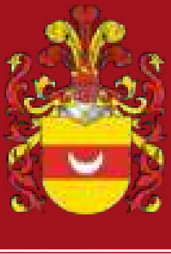


THE SALVIATI FAMILY

The wealthy Salviati family expanded their financial interests into banking. As well as branches in Florence and Pisa, they opened branches in London and Bruges in the mid-15th century. Like the Medici, the family were merchant bankers, trading wool in England to be used in their woollen cloth factory in Florence.

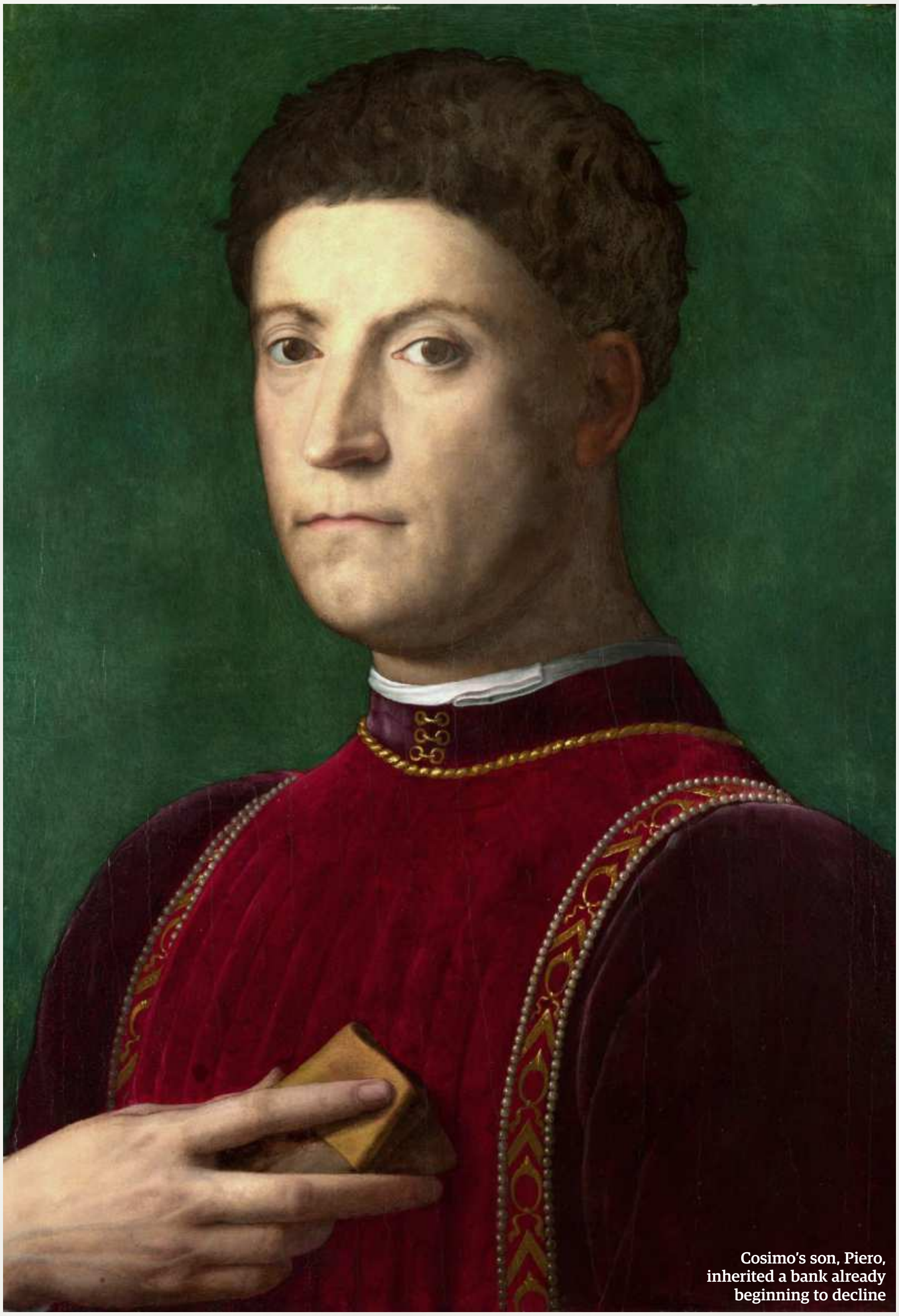
THE PAZZI FAMILY

The Pazzi family were the Medici’s main rivals. In 1478 Francesco de’ Pazzi, who managed the Pazzi Bank’s Roman branch, plotted to murder Lorenzo de’ Medici and his brother, Giuliano. Guiliano died of his wounds, but Lorenzo survived, leading to violent reprisals. The Pazzi name was suppressed and the family banished.



THE STROZZI FAMILY

The Strozzi family was once the wealthiest in Florence, thanks to their involvement in the banking trade. After being exiled from the city in 1434, the family became fierce rivals of the Medici family. After their return to Florence the two families intermarried several times, bringing the rivalry to an end.

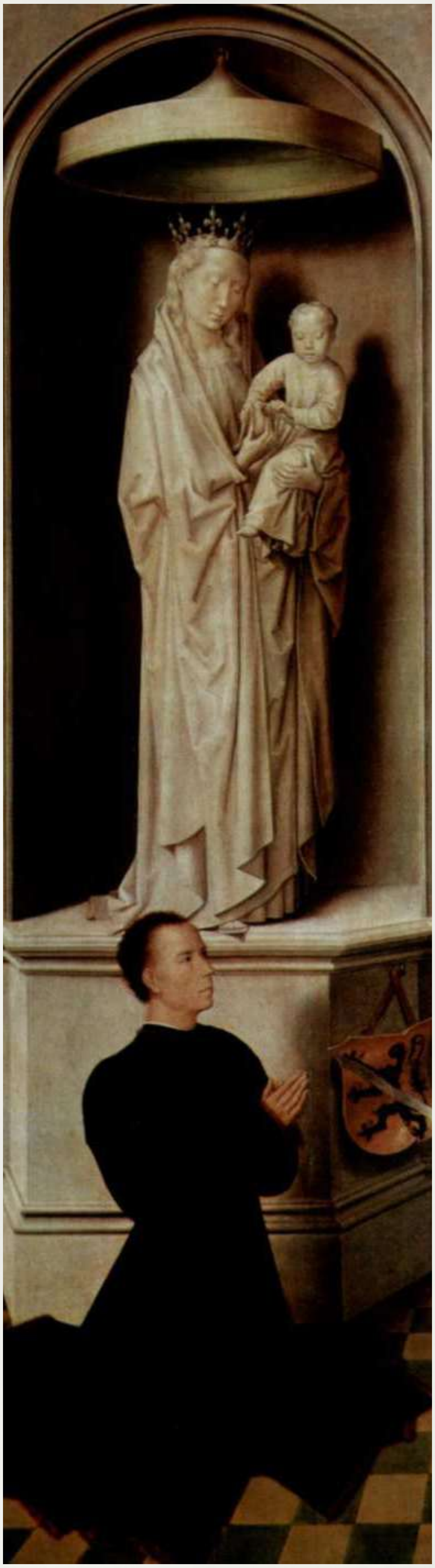


Cosimo's son, Piero, inherited a bank already beginning to decline

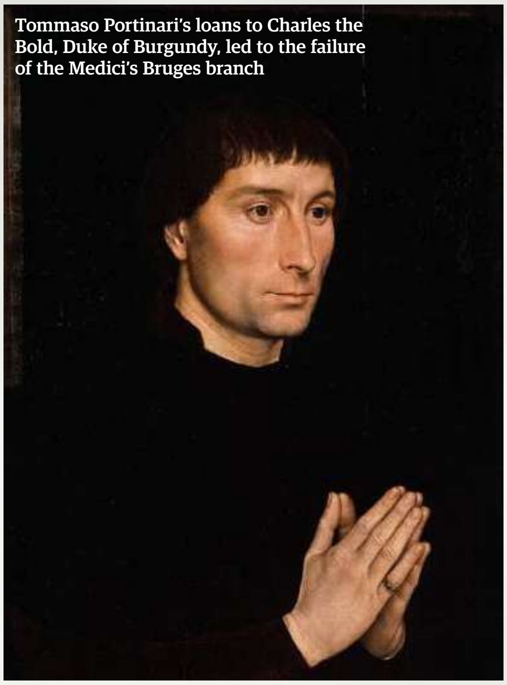
the fact that the management of the bank was to be undertaken by him and also as a means of inducing him to make further profits. No profit or capital could be taken from the company during the four-year period, save a modest annual salary for Tani. Losses - should there be any - were to be shared in the same proportions, further incentivising the manager to work hard to ensure his branch's success.

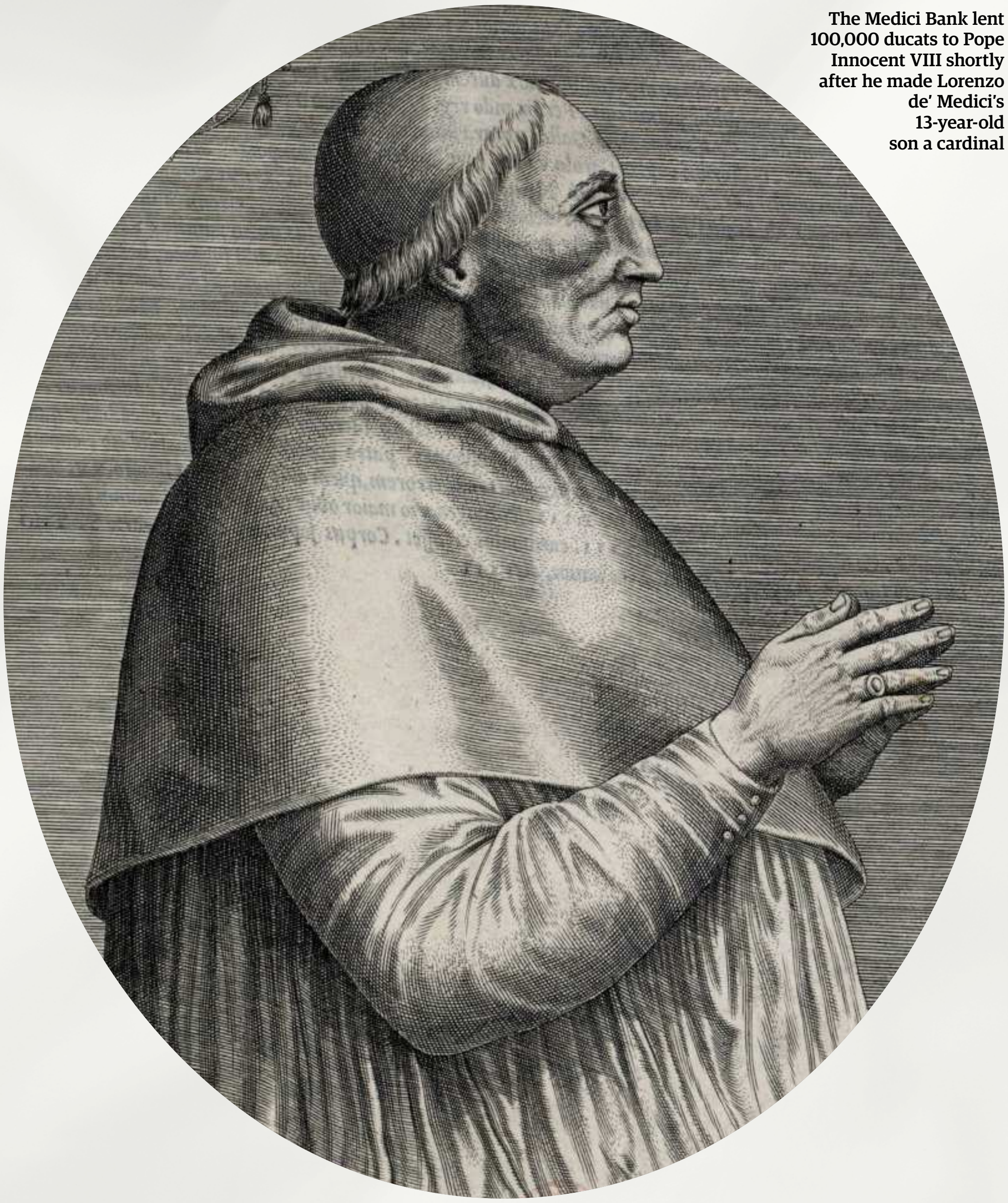
By contract, the branch manager had to reside in Bruges, although he was permitted to visit the fairs at Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom and to go to London, Calais or Middelburg on business. He was to ensure that his activities were confined "to lawful trade and to licit and honourable exchange transactions".

Under the terms of the contract, the new manager, Angelo Tani, could give loans or credit to merchants and craftsmen after making careful assessment of their standing and reputation. He was, however, banned from making loans to princes or from selling foreign exchange on credit to the nobility or churchmen - they had to pay up front. Tani was barred from trading or carrying out



Angelo Tani became the manager of the bank's Bruges branch in 1455, having served as an agent there since 1450


Tommaso Portinari's loans to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, led to the failure of the Medici's Bruges branch


The Medici Bank lent 100,000 ducats to Pope Innocent VIII shortly after he made Lorenzo de' Medici's 13-year-old son a cardinal

activities on his own behalf during the duration of the contract. To ensure that the branch was not overexposed, he could not spend more than 600 groats per year on English or Flemish wool or cloth without the consent of the senior partners. All shipments of goods had to be properly insured by the branch manager, although he was free to choose whether to insure goods transported overland, save that they could not amount to more than 300 groats at a time.

The partnership agreements were intended to protect the Medici interests, ensuring that their branch managers had to consult on any business likely to expose them to considerable risk. Cosimo, as his father had done before him, also kept a close eye on the accounts of his branches. Under the terms of the Bruges partnership agreement and those of other branches, the balance sheet was sent to the senior partners every year, with accounts ending on 24 March, which was traditionally the last day of the year. As a further safeguard for the senior partners, they had the power to demand a copy of the balance sheet at any time. In this way Cosimo hoped to ensure the continuing profitability of his bank and avoid bad debts.

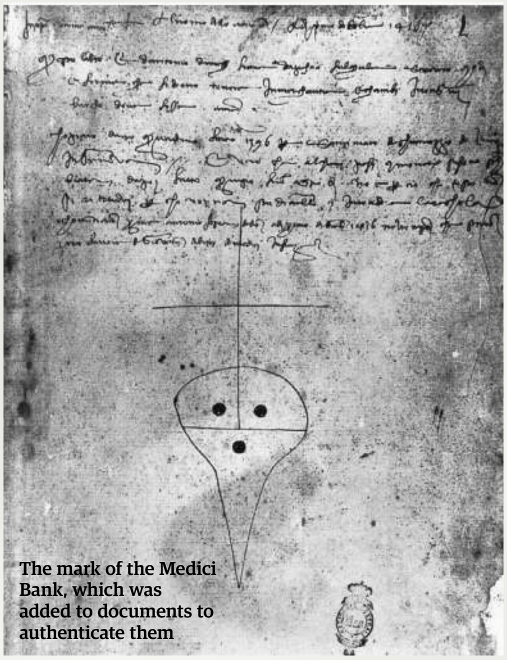
Due to his power under the partnership agreements and his ability to terminate the partnerships of any branch manager who displeased him, Cosimo was widely obeyed. He had an excellent eye for business and was a good judge of character, just as his father had been. During his lifetime, Cosimo always refused to elevate the assistant branch manager at Bruges, Tommaso Portinari, to partner, showing signs that he distrusted him. Such caution was proved right when, after Cosimo's death, Portinari became branch manager and quickly lost nearly 10,000 groats through incautious loans to Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. When these were defaulted upon after Charles's death, Portinari made further loans to Charles's son-in-law, Maximilian of Austria, who also failed to pay the bulk back. The relaxation of grip on the branch managers that occurred after Cosimo's death would ultimately be a decisive factor in the failure of the bank.

“THE RELAXATION OF GRIP ON THE BRANCH MANAGERS PROVED DECISIVE IN THE BANK'S FAILURE”

While Cosimo kept a very close eye on his branches, he was not involved in the daily business of banking, with his focus on politics and the arts. Instead, the Florentine branch was managed by Francesco Ingherami, one of Cosimo's closest associates. He was replaced around the time of Cosimo's death in 1464 with Francesco Sassetti, who had previously served as manager of the Avignon branch before transferring to Geneva in the 1450s. In 1458 he joined the Florentine branch, first as Ingherami's assistant and then as manager himself.

Sassetti became increasingly important in the Medici Bank under Cosimo's eldest son, Piero, who lacked his father's charisma and who struggled to balance his political responsibilities and ambitions with the needs of his banking empire. Piero di Cosimo de' Medici was considerably more cautious than his father, ordering the Bruges branch to cease its loans to the duke of Burgundy in 1464 and calling in a number of loans to prominent Florentine customers in the same year, causing

The Hof Bladelin, a palace in the centre of Bruges that served as the Medici Bank's branch in the city



The mark of the Medici Bank, which was added to documents to authenticate them

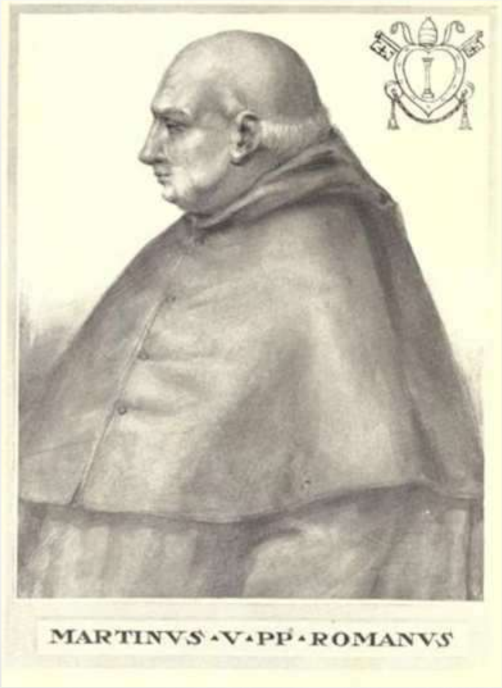
a financial crash in the city. While business was still steady, there were signs that the Medici fortunes were beginning to slip. In 1469 Piero was reported to be worth 66,452 florins – an astronomical sum, but considerably lower than the 122,669 florins possessed by his father in 1457. Piero did not long survive Cosimo, leaving control of the Medici Bank to his 20-year-old son, Lorenzo, in December 1469.

Although intelligent and charismatic, Lorenzo was a poor businessman and had little interest in the Medici Bank, leaving its management almost entirely to Francesco Sassetti. Sassetti, too, neglected the bank. His failure to notice that the manager of the Lyons branch was falsifying the accounts nearly resulted in that branch's collapse in 1488. It was Sassetti, too, who arranged for the appointment of Tommaso Portinari as manager at Bruges, giving him permission to loan sums equal to more than twice that branch's capital to the duke of Burgundy.

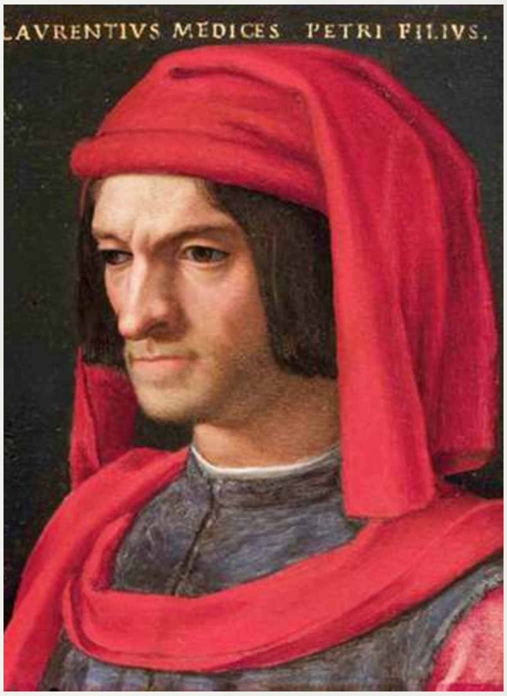
Financial conditions across Europe were also worsening in the later 15th century. A devaluation in the price of gold against silver hit the Medici Bank particularly hard, since it both led to increases in the interest they paid on deposits and a reduction in the value of sureties that they took on loans. Lorenzo, too, relied on the bank to fund his extravagant lifestyle, taking considerably more from the bank than he ploughed back in. The risky loans to foreign princes further weakened it, while the Medici began to rely on more and more borrowing to meet their capital commitments. Lorenzo also caused outrage by propping up the bank with public funds in Florence.

Matters could not continue indefinitely. The London branch was already tottering by the time of Cosimo's death in 1464, with the branch's losses finally written off and the partnership dissolved in 1478. The Venice branch, too, was gone by 1470, while the Bruges partnership was ended in 1478 in the face of staggering bad debt. Even the branch in Rome, which had always been the most profitable, was facing financial ruin by the 1490s. It had, however, been able to make a loan of 100,000 ducats to Pope Innocent VIII in 1489. Only weeks before the pope had made Lorenzo's younger son, Giovanni, a cardinal.

The end came in 1494 when a mob entered the Palazzo Medici in Florence and burned the bank's records. With the Medici rule in Florence temporarily brought to an end by revolution, the bank was liquidated by the city's new government. With all its branches dissolved, the once great Medici Bank was gone.



Pope Martin V appointed the Medici Bank as papal bankers in 1420, ensuring its Roman branch was its most profitable


LAVRENTIVS MEDICES PETRI FILIVS.

Lorenzo the Magnificent had little interest in business and failed to halt the bank's decline

THE MEDICI: GODFATHERS OF THE RENAISSANCE

The rebirth of art and thought in Europe began just as the Medici rose to power, and the dynasty would be one of the main forces behind this cultural revolution

Words **June Woolerton**

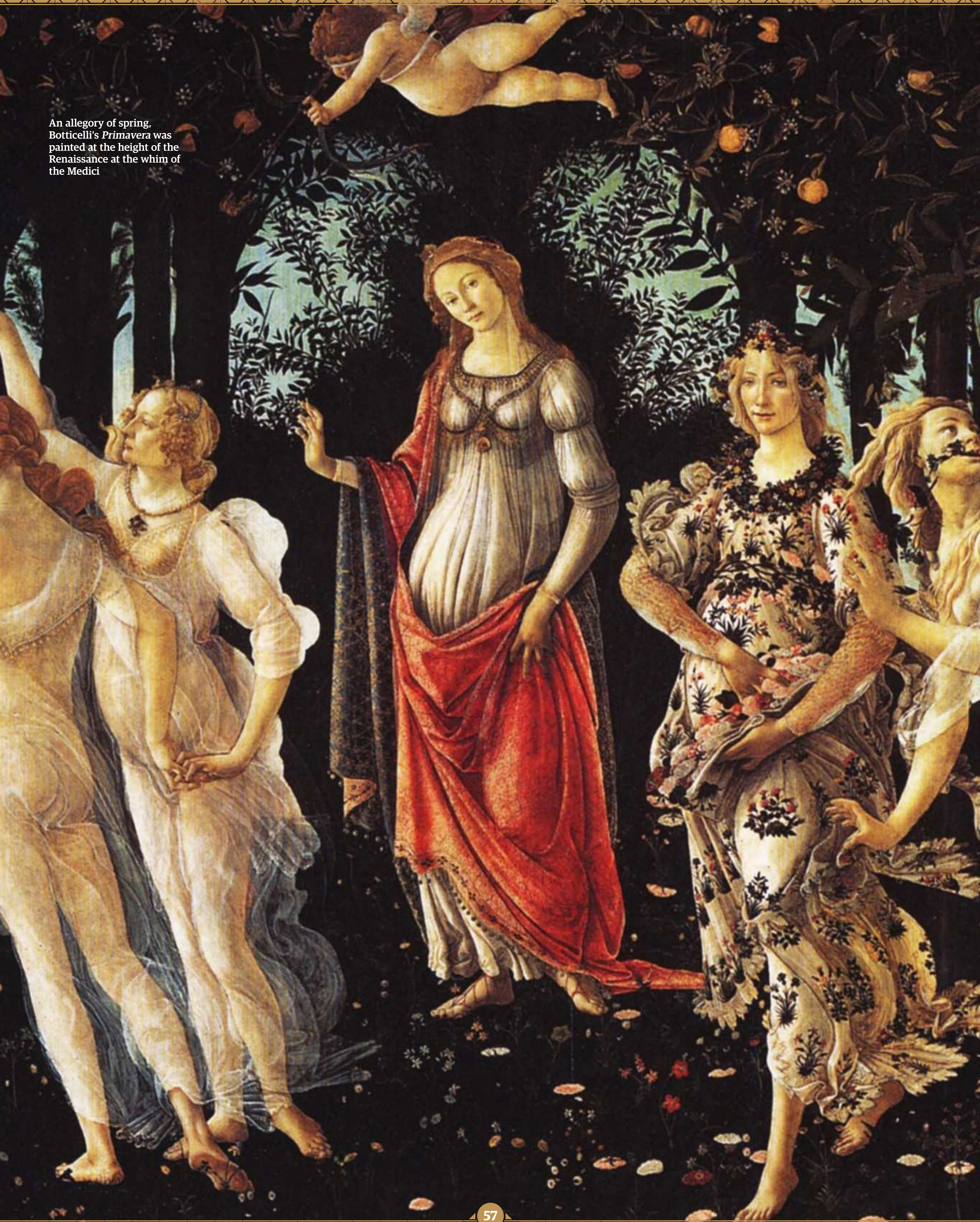
The Medici loved to make money, but they also loved to spend it, and nothing gave them greater pleasure than patronage of the arts. The city that they ruled became a testament to their love of culture as they filled Florence with fine buildings, sculpture and painting. Their largesse extended to support for writers and thinkers, while their hard-won political expertise made them a friend to those whose philosophies saw them targeted by the Church. For the Medici weren't just collecting art. They were funding and fuelling new ways of thinking, creating and believing, as their money and passion for learning made them vital to the rise of the Renaissance.

The word is a modern take on a concept that changed Europe forever and which sparked to life in Florence. 'Renaissance', or rebirth, was the name coined by later historians for the artistic, scientific and philosophical changes that swept over the continent between the 14th and 16th centuries. It described the movement that brought new perspective and reality to art, new scope and grandeur to buildings and new ideas to religion and politics. It was a time that revived the wonders of antiquity and which saw thinkers turn to classic scholars for inspiration. The Renaissance marked the movement from medieval to modern and it owed much of its growth and spread to the passions of the Medici.

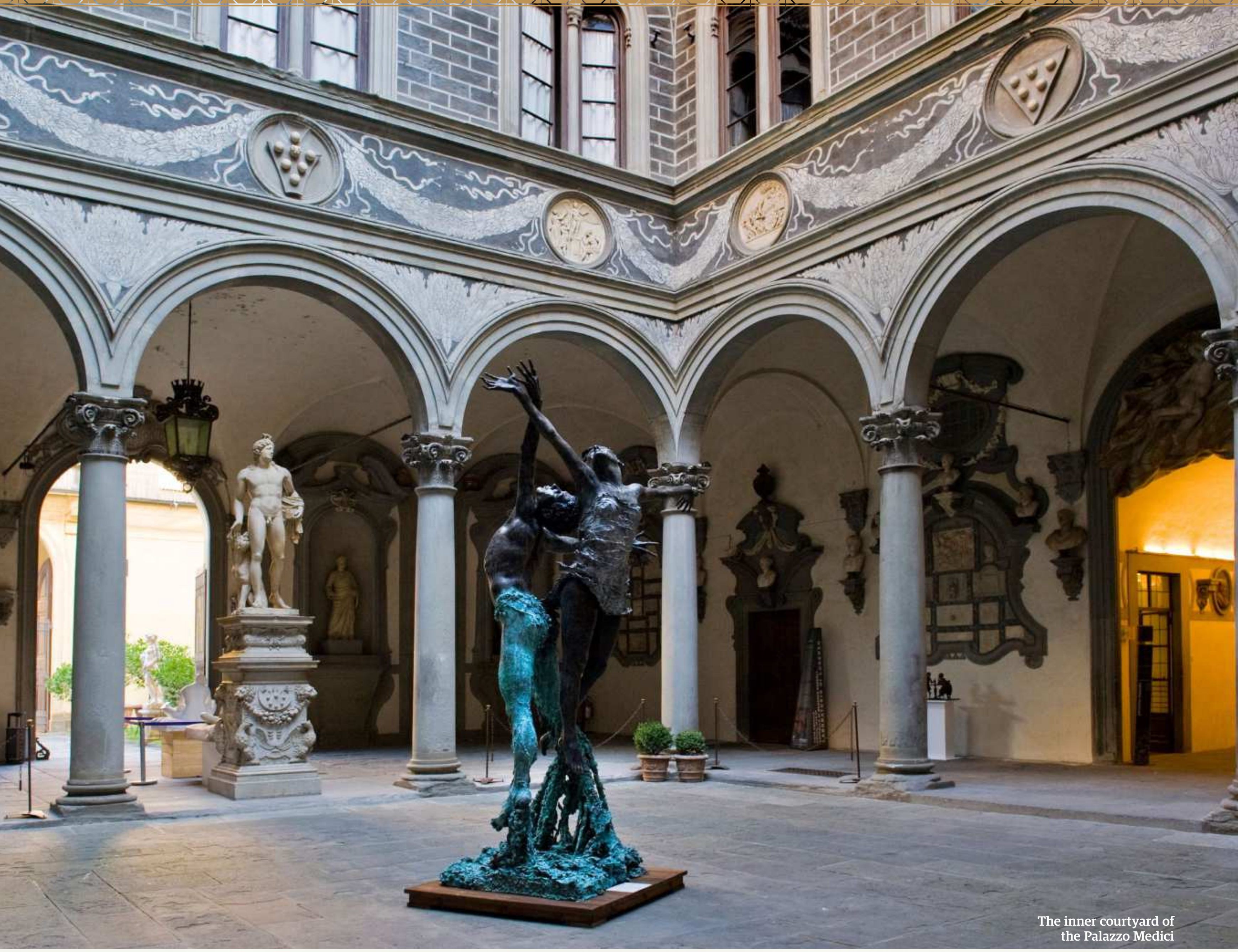
Its development paralleled the rise of the dynasty itself. As Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici was making the family's first major fortune in the 14th century, Florentine and Tuscan artists were producing innovative work that challenged the establishment. In the early 1300s, Dante, a son of Florence, had written his *Divine Comedy* in his native Tuscan rather than Latin, making it accessible to a far greater audience. Among his family friends were the parents of Petrarch, the poet whose rediscovery of the letters of Cicero revolutionised literature and who had spent part of his life in Tuscany. Boccaccio, who like Petrarch was instrumental in the development of the new perspective known as humanism, was a son of Florence who had spent much of his life there. As Giovanni established his famous bank in the city, he became part of a world teeming with new ideas and he decided to make his family part of it.

Like much he did, Giovanni's involvement with the emerging Renaissance was low-key but had far-reaching effects. In 1401, just four years after setting up his bank in Florence, he became part of a judging panel picking a design for new doors at the Florence Baptistery. The commission was given to Lorenzo Ghiberti, whose brass creation, with 28 panels including a series featuring parts of Christ's story from the New Testament, was hailed for its realism. It was an expensive project, with the bronze alone costing 34,000 ducats, but Giovanni's contribution had begun his family's famous reputation as patrons of the arts.

Giovanni also promoted the work of Filippo Brunelleschi, whose architecture would blossom with Medici money. Brunelleschi had spent time in Rome with his friend, the sculptor Donatello, where they studied the construction of the city's famous ruins. What he learned would influence his work and change Western architecture. Giovanni gave



An allegory of spring, Botticelli's *Primavera* was painted at the height of the Renaissance at the whim of the Medici



The inner courtyard of the Palazzo Medici

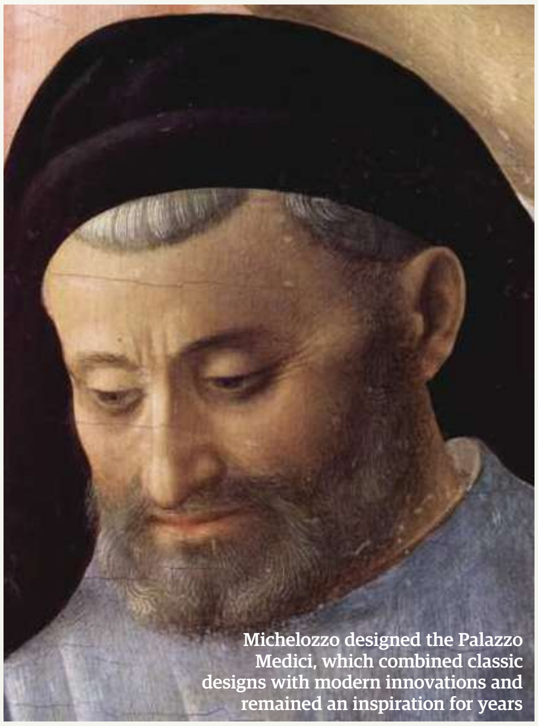
"COSIMO CHANGED THE VERY ASPECT OF THE CITY HE RULED"

commissions to both men, supporting Brunelleschi to design and create the chapel and Old Sacristy at the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence as it was rebuilt from 1419 onwards, while he asked Donatello to create sculptures for the new building.

It wasn't Brunelleschi's only Medici commission, for by then, Giovanni's elder son, Cosimo, was making his own mark on the artistic life of Florence, the city he would come to rule once leadership of the dynasty fell to him. While still in his father's shadow, he began the patronages that would mark his public life. It was Cosimo who backed Brunelleschi to construct the dome of Florence's cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, and the end result was a groundbreaking octagonal structure, the first ever made without wooden supports.

Architecture would be Cosimo's great passion. While he continued to support Brunelleschi's work, a younger man would become his favourite. Michelozzo di Bartolomeo was born in Florence in 1396, just as the Medici were establishing their bank in the city, and he was an early beneficiary of their wealth, training in the workshop of Lorenzo Ghiberti as his famous bronze doors came to life, where he rubbed shoulders with other emerging artists including Donatello and Uccello.

Cosimo commissioned Michelozzo to one of the Medici villas outside Florence, as he took the helm of the family following Giovanni's death, and the men's devotion to each other was so strong that the architect accompanied his patron when the Albizzi exiled him from Florence. They spent several months in Venice, and when the citizens of Florence begged Cosimo to return, he paid for Michelozzo to build a library for the city that had been their home as outcasts. The result, the magnificent building at the Monastery of San Giorgio, would soon be replicated in Florence itself.



Michelozzo designed the Palazzo Medici, which combined classic designs with modern innovations and remained an inspiration for years

Soon, he had commissioned Michelozzo to rebuild the religious complex at San Marco, with work beginning in 1434. Ten years later, they created Florence's first public library at the site, with Michelozzo creating a room filled with plenty of light to house Cosimo de' Medici's impressive collection of manuscripts.

But their most famous partnership began in 1444, when Cosimo asked for a new residence in the heart of Florence. Michelozzo's design for the Palazzo Medici combined elements of Italian Gothic with classical lines, and the three-storey building, with its rusticated floors and crenelated roofline, became a major influence on Florentine architecture for years and marked a turning point in Renaissance architecture.

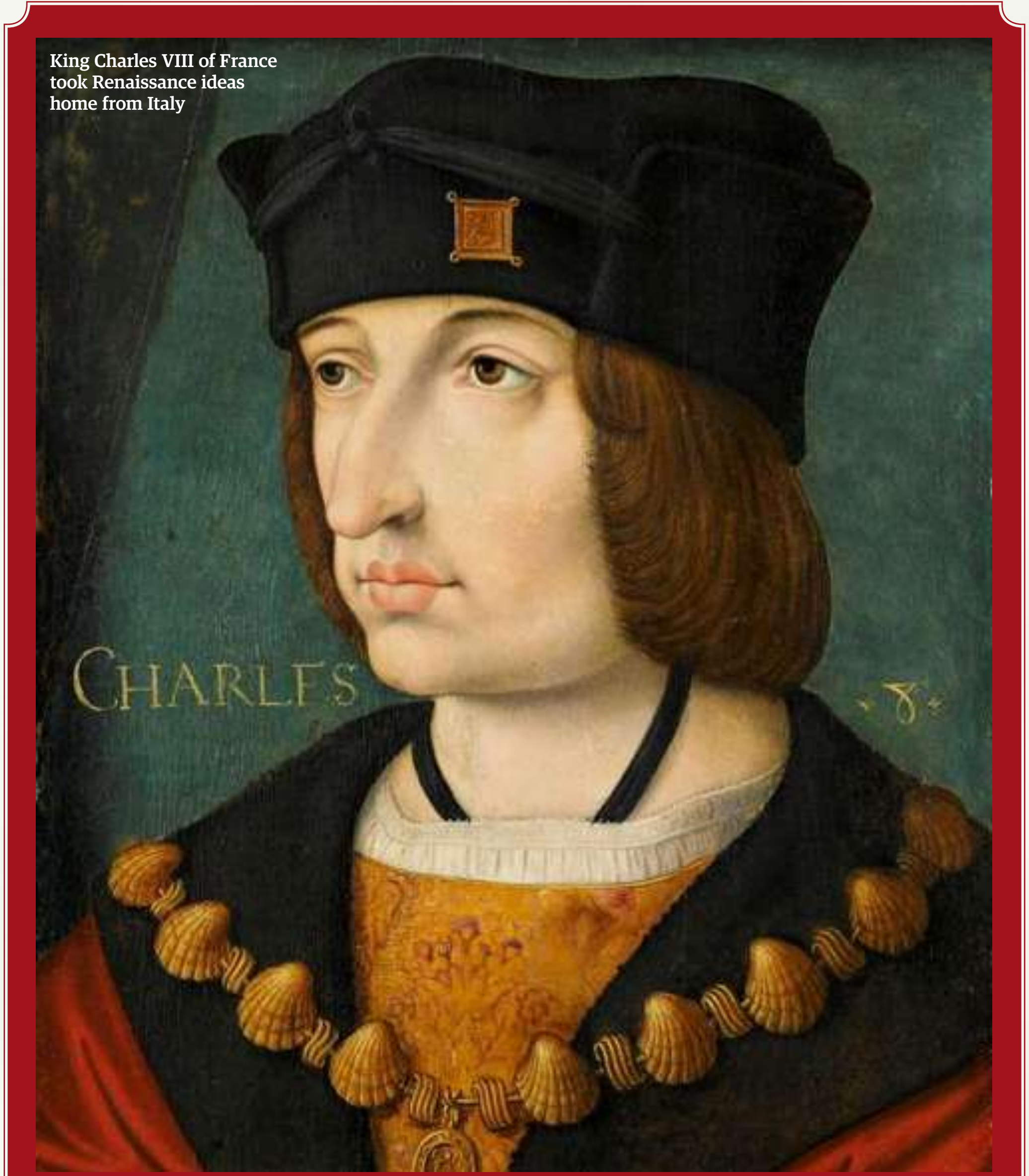
Cosimo changed the very aspect of the city he ruled with his architectural passions, but inside his new buildings were artworks every bit as important. He was a patron of Fra Angelico, who moved to the newly remodelled San Marco friary in 1436 and was encouraged by Cosimo to decorate its interior, leading to one of the most famous pieces of art of the 15th century. Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* was praised for its realism and its focus on human emotion, and under Cosimo's patronage, the monk would produce more famous works including the San Marco altarpiece.

The religious works of Fra Filippo Lippi also won favour with Cosimo, as did the frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli, who decorated the Magi Chapel at the Palazzo Medici with a scene featuring the Medici as part of the procession following the Wise Men as they journeyed through Tuscany. And he returned to one of his father's favoured artists, commissioning Donatello to produce bronzes of *David* and of *Judith and Holofernes*. The subject matter marked a watershed in Renaissance thinking. Not only were the statues examples of the new realism, they also used well-known stories to make a political point. Cosimo had chosen two victories against the odds as visual reminders to everyone in Florence of how his dynasty had come to power from seemingly nowhere.

The inner world was just as important to Cosimo, who became a vital patron of humanism, the concept which underpinned many of the developments crucial to the Renaissance. The philosophy put people at the centre of their own world and argued that humans should embrace their achievements in arts, literature and science. Among its most high-profile proponents was Niccolò de' Niccoli, whose works sat alongside those of Leonardo Bruni in Cosimo's new library.

Marsilio Ficino's long association with the family began in Cosimo's time, when the philosopher was asked to head the Platonic Academy, based on the ancient grouping run by Plato, that the all-powerful Medici was establishing to discuss and promote new ways of thinking.

In fact, Cosimo's passion for the arts was all-consuming and shared by his family. His brother, Lorenzo, supported his early patronage


King Charles VIII of France took Renaissance ideas home from Italy

THE SPREAD OF A NEW WORLD

The wide reach of Renaissance ideas and the impact they had on culture locally and internationally turned the Medici into the first patrons of a continental cultural revolution

The Renaissance was born in Florence and nurtured by the Medici, but by the mid-15th century, it was beginning to spread across Europe.

Hungary became a hotbed for new ideas from the 1450s onwards and one of its kings, Matthias Corvinus, even inspired Lorenzo de' Medici to expand his own library. Matthias had married Beatrice of Naples in 1476 and soon invited humanists including Antonio Bonfini to his court. A dynastic union also helped boost Renaissance thinking in Poland, where the 1518 wedding between Bona Sforza and King Sigismund led to a rush of invitations for new wave artists to visit their court.

Trade also helped spread ideas. The appearance of Renaissance art and philosophy in the Low Countries in the late-15th century was attributed in part to the import of art and ideas along business routes. The invasion of north Italy by the French king Charles VIII in 1495 led to the monarch and his troops taking back new ideas. Just 30 years later, King Francis I was inviting leading figures, including Leonardo da Vinci, to his court.

Meanwhile, Spanish and Portuguese explorers were leading the way in challenging long-established beliefs on the horizons of the known world itself.

The reign of Henry VIII saw reformation ideas sweep England, while religious change became a catalyst for new ideas across society in Germany, too. Both countries had already experienced a focus on literature in the vernacular, and the development of printing in the two regions also helped to promulgate the wave of new thinking that was changing Europe.

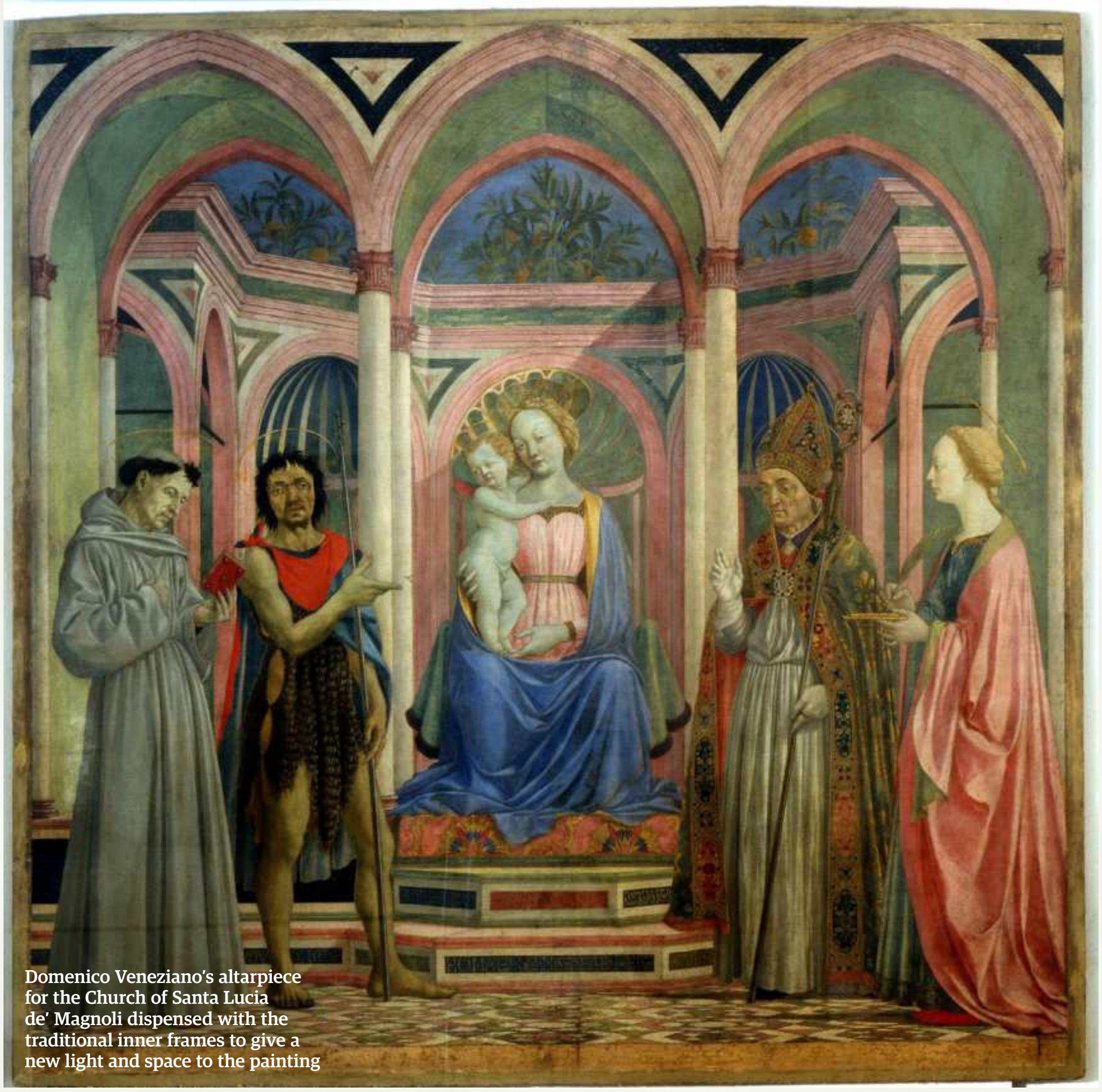
of Brunelleschi, while his elder son, Piero, was involved in the family's backing for Gozzoli.

Piero, who ruled Florence between 1464 and 1469, expanded Medici collections with works by Dutch and Flemish artists, as the Renaissance spread into Northern Europe. Cosimo's second son, Giovanni, inherited his father's passion for architecture while he also supported sculptor Desiderio da Settignano and the painter Domenico Veneziano, who also worked for Piero and whose masterpieces included the altarpiece from Santa Lucia dè Magnoli in Florence.

As the Renaissance progressed, the Medici involvement with it began to change hue. The rise to power of Piero's son, Lorenzo, saw the family's role alter to reflect their overarching status as first family of Florence. Lorenzo, later called 'the Magnificent', told others who to commission and was influential in patrons picking projects so that his word carried even more might when it came to artistic success.

Lorenzo showed considerable cultural ability himself, and like Cosimo the Elder, his real passion lay in architecture. His favourite was Giuliano da Sangallo, who designed the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano for Lorenzo as well as the Augustinian monastery at San Gallo. His undisputed role as leader of Florence also meant that many of the building works that were turning the city into a beacon of Renaissance art needed his approval. Lorenzo's influence was everywhere.

His standing in Florence was also reflected in the artistic and cultural court he built at his own residences. The Medici were no longer the parvenus but the city's leading family, and Lorenzo packed his houses with some of the foremost thinkers and artists of the day. Michelangelo and



Domenico Veneziano's altarpiece for the Church of Santa Lucia de' Magnoli dispensed with the traditional inner frames to give a new light and space to the painting

TIMELINE OF THE RENAISSANCE

From its 14th-century origins to its 17th-century splendour, the Renaissance story is told through milestone moments that changed Europe forever

Dante's Divine Comedy
1308 – 1320
Dante Alighieri's allegorical poem, written in his native Tuscan rather than Latin, opens up literature to a new audience, while his focus on personal narrative recalls the classical sources central to the Renaissance.

Petrarch, poet laureate
1341
Italian poet and thinker, Petrarch, is made poet laureate of Rome, beginning the most high-profile part of a career that will see him develop humanism and reintroduce classical texts, including Cicero, to Europe.

Door to the future
1401
Lorenzo Ghiberti wins the commission to create bronze doors for the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence. His workshop will become a training ground for Donatello and Michelozzo, while the doors and a later set are hailed as masterpieces of modern artistry.

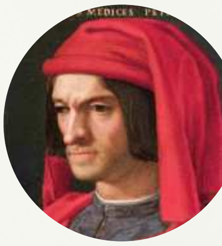
New thinking in Venice
1423
Francesco Foscari is elected doge of Venice, beginning a long reign that will see him patronise artists including Donatello and introduce Renaissance ideas to the city.

Medici, masters of Florence
1434
Under Cosimo the Elder, the Medici assume control of the cradle of the Renaissance, Florence, and begin a period of unparalleled support for new ideas which helps create a cultural revolution.

An influx of new thinking
1453
The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople marks the fall of the Byzantine Empire and results in many of the great thinkers of Eastern cultures moving to Western Europe, where their ideas spread.

Gutenberg's printing press
1455
Johannes Gutenberg produces printed Bibles in Mainz, leading the way for the written word to reach a wider audience than ever before and providing a new conduit for Renaissance thought to spread throughout Europe.

Rise of the great patron
1469
Lorenzo de' Medici assumes power in Florence, beginning a period that will mark a high point in the Renaissance thanks to his patronage.



The theory of the soul
1474
Renaissance thinker and Medici protégé Marsilio Ficino completes 'Platonic Theory', in which he discusses the immortality of the soul, but his embrace of antiquity to form new ideas almost sees him condemned as a heretic.

“DA VINCI HAD LEARNED MUCH OF HIS CRAFT IN WORKSHOPS SPONSORED BY LORENZO”

Leonardo da Vinci all spent time with the family, where they rubbed shoulders with some of the most famous humanists of the day. For Lorenzo’s other great passion was the written word and the philosophy that helped produce it.

His home was a refuge for men leading the revolution in thought that was sweeping through Europe. Marsilio Ficino’s association with the Medici strengthened under Lorenzo. During his rule, Ficino produced his most famous work, his treatise on the immortality of the soul, as well as some of his more controversial pieces including his 1489 work based on astrology, which saw him attacked by Church authorities.

Lorenzo also gave his backing to the erratic Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who wrote the first printed book to be banned by the Church. Pico’s *900 Theses* defended his ideas on a range of subjects including religion, natural philosophy and magic, and was accompanied by the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which became a seminal text in the spread of Renaissance ideas. When 13 of his theses were banned by Pope Innocent VIII, he wrote an Apologia in their defence which he dedicated to Lorenzo. His capture following the banning of his writings only came to an end thanks to Lorenzo de’ Medici’s intervention.

Angelo Ambrogini, usually called Poliziano, also made his home with the Medici during Lorenzo’s tenure, and he was employed as a tutor for the next generation of the family. His works marked a high point in humanist thought, while Lorenzo was particularly supportive of Poliziano’s translations of the classics including Homer’s *Iliad*.

But Lorenzo’s time as head of the Medici clan was best known for the flowering of art later described as a golden age. During the later decades of the 15th century, Sandro Botticelli produced two of his most famous works for the family. Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, from the more junior line of the family, was the owner and most likely the instigator of *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*. Piero del Pollaiuolo and Domenico Ghirlandaio also began to flourish as Lorenzo’s rule continued.

His influence spread beyond Florence. Lorenzo commissioned marble reliefs from Verrocchio as a gift to the King of Hungary, and patronised a Da Sangallo design for a palazzo that was gifted to the king of Naples, while the first plans for the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, involving Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, were most likely the fruits of a plan between the Medici and Pope Sixtus IV as they made peace with one another. Lorenzo’s backing for projects beyond Florence helped take Renaissance ideas across Europe.

Many of the men he patronised went on to produce some of the most celebrated works of the Renaissance. Michelangelo continued to find favour during the short and unhappy rule of Lorenzo’s son, Piero, and in the early-16th century created works including his sculpture, *David*, which would become masterpieces. Leonardo da Vinci, like Michelangelo, had learned much of his craft in the workshops and academies sponsored by Lorenzo, and those lessons came to vivid life in the 1500s as his art was celebrated across Europe.

But with the death of Lorenzo, the relationship between Medici patrons and artists started to alter.

Michelangelo’s *David* became a symbol of Florence and a testament to its integral role in the rise of the Renaissance

Discovery of the Americas
1492
Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus, funded by the money of Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, makes landfall in San Salvador, expanding Europe’s horizons to what will become known as the Americas.

A new perspective
1495 - 1498
Michelangelo paints *The Last Supper* on the walls of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, causing a sensation by his focus on the human responses of the Apostles as well as reaching new heights in the use of perspective.

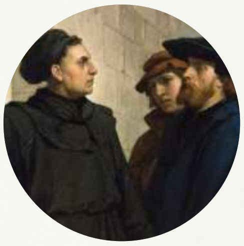
Art as politics
1504
Michelangelo’s *David*, a landmark humanist expression in sculpture, is unveiled and placed before the Signoria, underlining its use of art to portray the political message of the small city that fought back against giants.

Laughing at the past
1511
Desiderius Erasmus publishes his satire, *In Praise of Folly*, which uses humanist thinking to dissect long-held superstitions and traditions in Church and secular life across Europe.

A new perspective on philosophy
1513
Niccolò Machiavelli, a beneficiary of Medici patronage, writes *The Prince*, one of the first philosophies to represent the reality of politics. It will be published almost 20 years later on the orders of the second Medici pope, Clement VII.

The enigmatic smile
1513
Leonardo da Vinci refines his portrait of a Florentine noblewoman, now known as *Mona Lisa*, which reaches new heights in terms of accurate portrayal of the sitter in painting.

A religious revolution
1517
Martin Luther’s condemnation of the medieval sale of indulgences finds expression in his *95 Theses*, and when he pins a copy to the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg, he begins a revolt against Church rule that will change Europe forever.



Sailing into the unknown
1519
Ferdinand Magellan begins his voyage to the East Indies, which will result in the Portuguese explorer at the head of a Spanish expedition becoming the first man to lead a successful circumnavigation of the world.

The Sack of Rome
1527
The destruction of Renaissance works alongside religious images in the brutal Sack of Rome by mutinous imperial forces marks a turning point in the spread of new ideas.

Science makes its mark
1543
Nicolaus Copernicus first proposes that the Earth travels around the Sun, challenging centuries of beliefs and beginning a new era in scientific thinking.

Galileo’s journey begins
1590
Galileo enrols at the University of Pisa to study medicine, but soon begins to make the discoveries in physics and mathematics that will take scientific and Renaissance thinking into a new era.

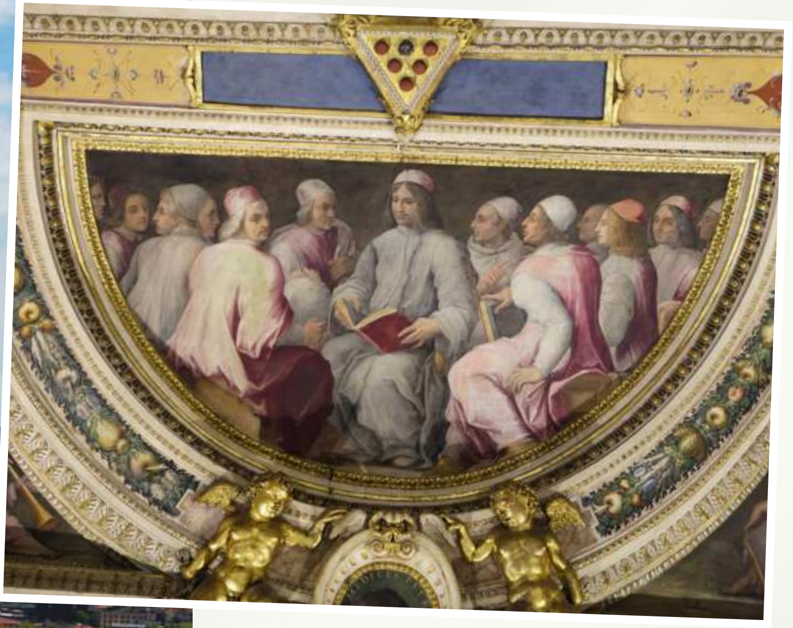
Brunelleschi's dome at Santa Maria del Fiore rose high into the Florentine sky thanks to financial backing from the Medici, and set the bar for new achievements in architecture

Niccolò Machiavelli dedicated his most famous work, *The Prince*, to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, even though the family had had him tortured when they returned to Florence from exile in 1512. The two Medici popes would offer Machiavelli commissions, only to find him less than flattering about the family in some of his writings. As the Renaissance took hold, the ideas became the master of the patrons.

Meanwhile, the Medici influence had reached Rome as the family finally got its hands on the papacy. The election of Lorenzo's second son, Giovanni, as Pope Leo X in March 1513, not only coincided with a restoration of the family's fortunes in Florence, but it also allowed the dynasty to bring its passion for Renaissance art and culture to the Eternal City.

Leo's great cultural project during his papacy was the restoration of St Peter's Basilica, which had fallen into disrepair. He was a true Medici, with a passion for architecture that also saw him back projects to widen the streets of Rome. Among his most important commissions in Rome was the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, which was started by Jacopo Sansovino; while in his home city of Florence he asked Michelangelo to build the New Sacristy at the Church of San Lorenzo, now indelibly associated with the Medici family.

> "THE MEDICI INFLUENCE REACHED ROME AS THE FAMILY GOT ITS HANDS ON THE PAPACY"



A fresco at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence shows Lorenzo the Magnificent surrounded by those who enjoyed his patronage

Leo also reformed and expanded the Roman University and set up printing presses for the Greek and Jewish communities in the city, allowing the further spread of literature and philosophy. He was an important patron of Raphael, who also helped decorate the walls of the open galleries that Leo had built at the Vatican palace to promote the spread of art.

Leo's confidant and relation, Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, witnessed much of this work as one of his closest advisers and he continued family support for Raphael. But his own rise to the papacy in 1523 as Pope Clement VII would mark a turnaround in Renaissance fortunes. In 1527, he was forced to flee as imperial soldiers carried out the Sack of Rome, destroying many of the treasures produced in the past centuries with the rise of new thinking. Following this disaster, Clement contained his patronage largely to Florence, where he supported the building of the Medici Chapels and the Laurentian Library.

Clement's rule would prove disastrous for Florence as he put his reputed son, Alessandro, in charge of the city, leading to unrest, murder and a fall in patronage of the arts. However, the restoration of the Medici line under Cosimo I saw the family's cultural profile rise once more. The Renaissance, by now, had spread across Europe, while its influence was flowering into distinct cultures in different areas. Cosimo, named Duke of Florence in 1537, set about showing the might of the Medici with glittering art and architecture.

Cosimo made a favourite of Agnolo Bronzino, who became his court painter in 1539 and who had been trained in the school of mannerism, which evolved from Renaissance art. His portraits of Cosimo and his family added a new layer of realism, while his works also included paintings of the Medici ancestors to boost the new duke's hold on power.

During Cosimo's reign, the substantial Palazzo Pitti came under Medici control, and Cosimo commissioned Bartolomeo Ammannati to enlarge the building while Giorgio Vasari was charged with producing exquisite frescoes for its interior. He relied heavily on Niccolo Trebbio to create the ornate gardens that were then dominating public art while he amassed a fine collection of bronzes and sculptures.

By now, the Medici were no longer leading the charge of the Renaissance and had become just one of many ruling families to use commissions to further arts and science. Among their last great patronages was Galileo Galilei, who began studying medicine at the University of Pisa in 1580 and who would count Cosimo II among his greatest supporters. His arguments that the Earth revolved around the Sun would change scientific thinking forever, and his appointment as court mathematician to Cosimo allowed him the freedom he needed to further his ideas. It would be the last great contribution of the Medici dynasty to the Renaissance.

By the time Galileo was appointed in 1610, the movement was coming to an end, as was the power of the Medici. Within a century, their wealth and influence disappeared, while a cultural shift towards Enlightenment led to new art and new ways of thinking. But the Medici left a legacy of cultural support that produced some of the finest art ever made, as well as altering the way a whole continent thought forever.

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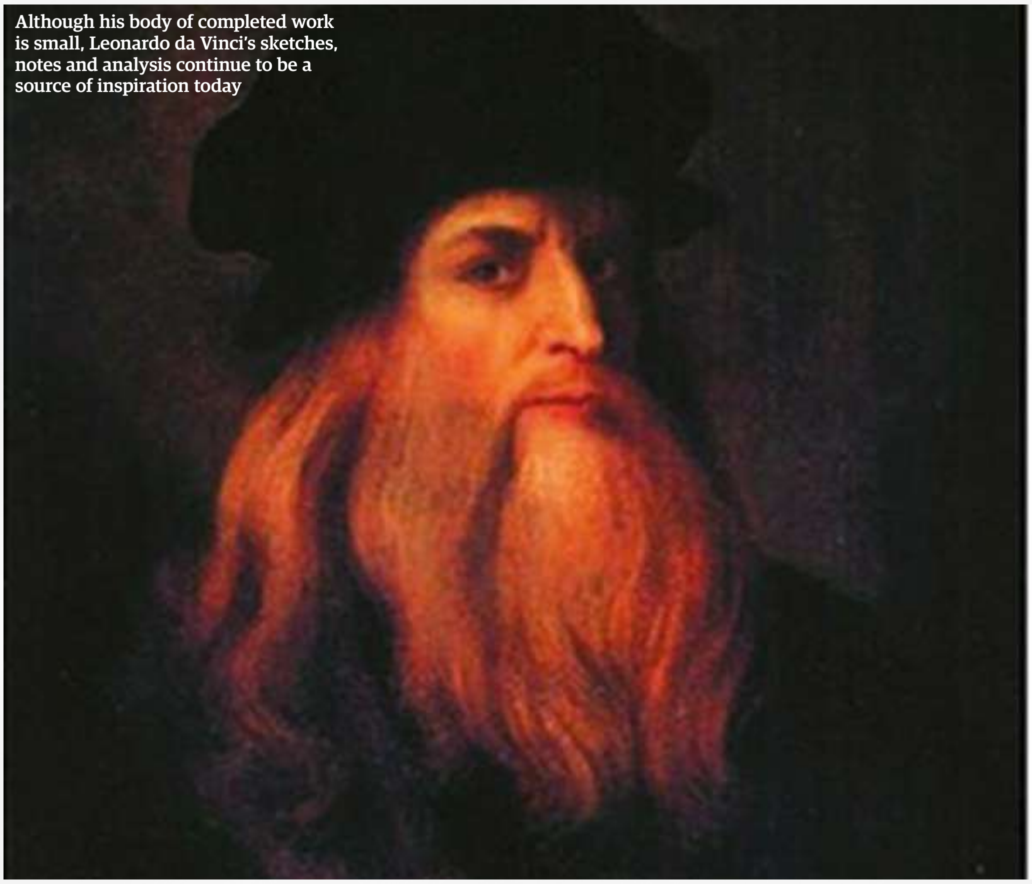
LEONARDO DA VINCI

Leonardo da Vinci has been claimed by many as the greatest polymath the world has ever seen; his universal curiosity and intellectual brilliance place him in a position in the Renaissance similar to that held by Aristotle in the ancient world

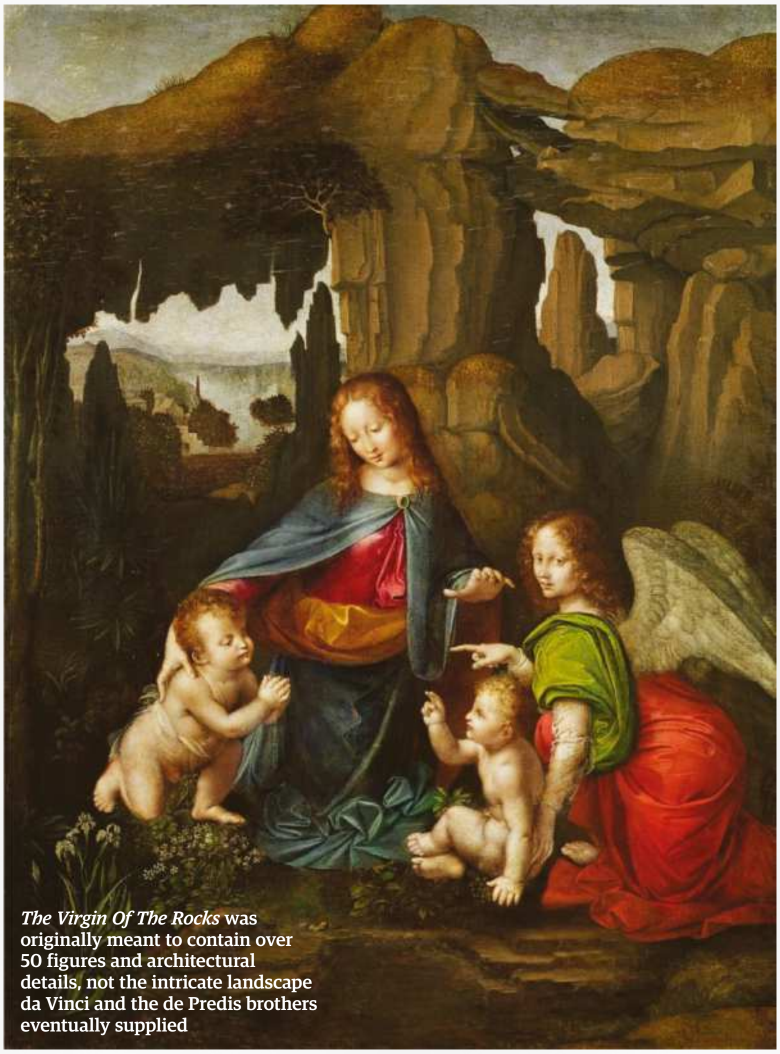
Words **Derek Wilson**

His origins can scarcely have been less auspicious. He was the illegitimate son of a well-to-do notary and a peasant girl. The appellation 'da Vinci' simply indicates the place where Leonardo grew up, then a small walled hilltop town some 42 kilometres from Florence. It was here, in his father's birthplace, that he spent much of his childhood. It did not take long for the boy's remarkable talents to be recognised. Leonardo was fascinated by everything. He was seldom without charcoal, pen or brush in his hand, compulsively noting in detail flowers, birds, animals, human faces - whatever at the moment attracted his attention. It is this universal fascination for all aspects of nature that explains one of the apparent paradoxes of Leonardo's life: he left an enormous body of work - paintings, drawings, written analysis, notes and sketches, but much of it was unfinished. His butterfly mind flitted from subject to subject, making incisive observations before moving on, leaving those observations incomplete.

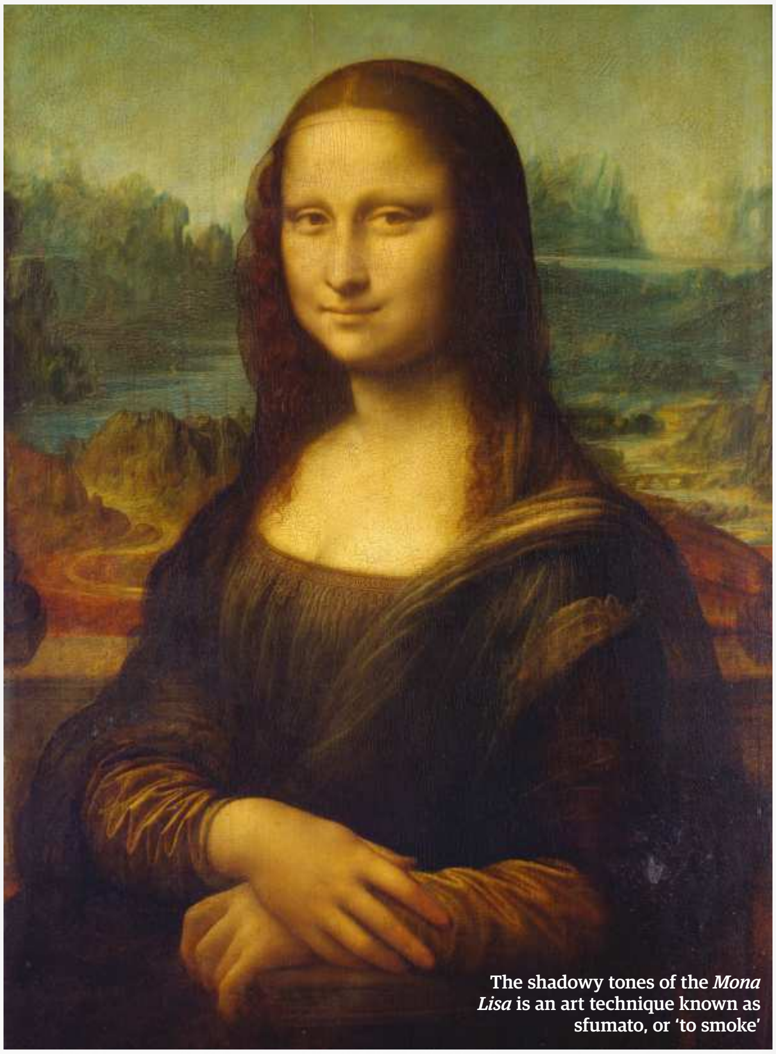
Recognising his son's talent, Piero da Vinci placed him in the workshop of the great Florentine artist, Verrocchio, circa 1467. Verrocchio, patronised by the Medici rulers of Florence and other leading citizens, had a large output of paintings as well as statuary in marble and bronze. Specialisation was a thing of the future and the studio master



Although his body of completed work is small, Leonardo da Vinci's sketches, notes and analysis continue to be a source of inspiration today



The Virgin Of The Rocks was originally meant to contain over 50 figures and architectural details, not the intricate landscape da Vinci and the de Predis brothers eventually supplied



The shadowy tones of the *Mona Lisa* is an art technique known as sfumato, or 'to smoke'

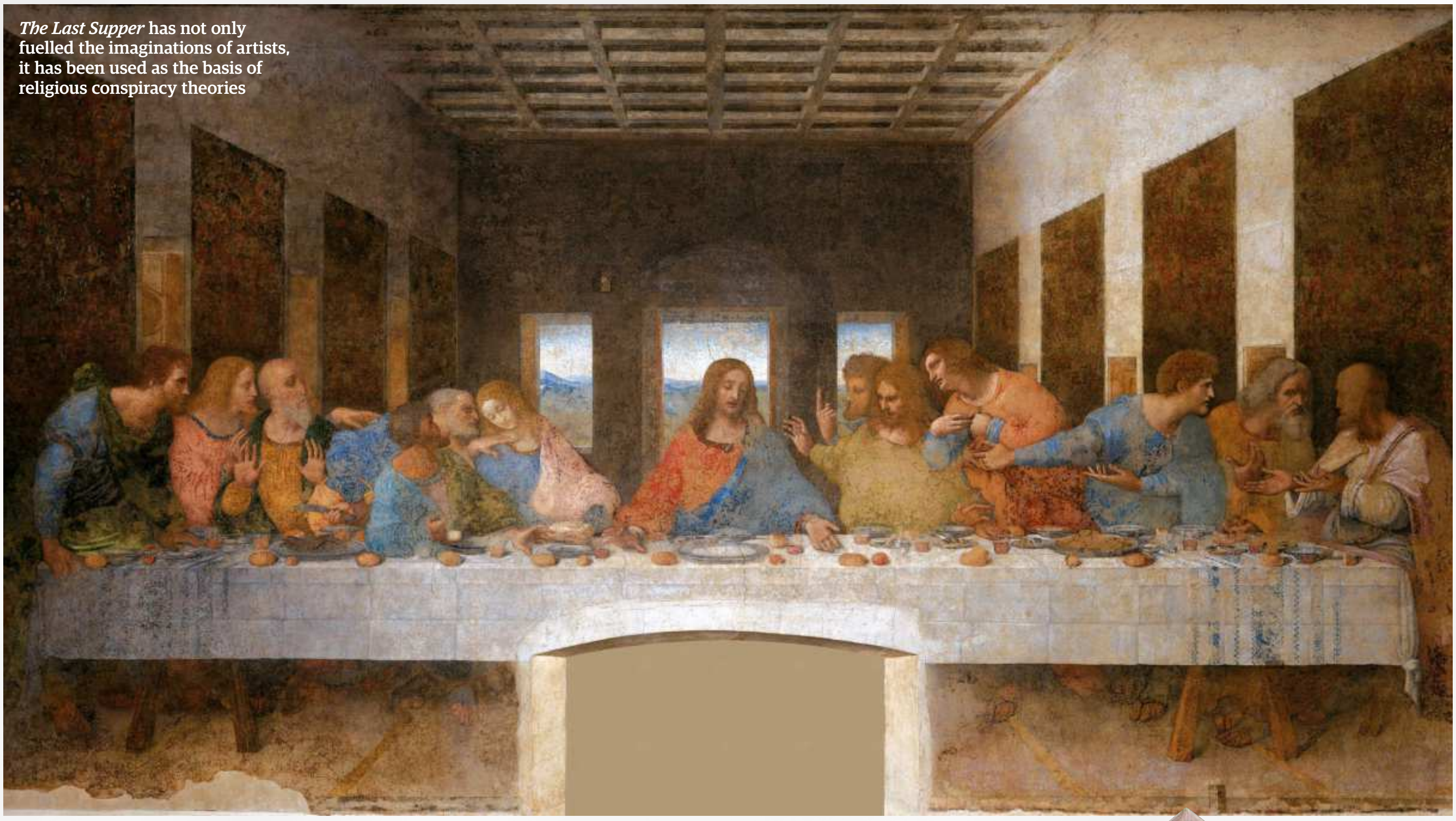
expected his apprentices to achieve competence in several branches of the arts. Indeed, 'art' was not an activity separate from the pursuit of those areas of study we now think of as 'science' and 'technology'. Therefore, Leonardo was encouraged to explore, for example, the flight of birds, the movement of water and mathematics. The art historian, Giorgio Vasari, described Leonardo as a "modernist," a painter capable of "the subtlest counterfeiting of all the minutiae of nature exactly as they are." His earliest authenticated painting, *The Annunciation* (c.1472), reveals that, while still under the influence of his master and producing a conventional religious work, he could not resist the temptation to place his angel on a bed of minutely-observed flowers. This loving observation of nature was something Leonardo shared with a few of his contemporary artists in the Netherlands.

"COMPARISONS FAIL TO DO JUSTICE TO THE UNIQUE PHENOMENON THAT WAS LEONARDO DA VINCI. HE WAS… A PHILOSOPHER-ARTIST"

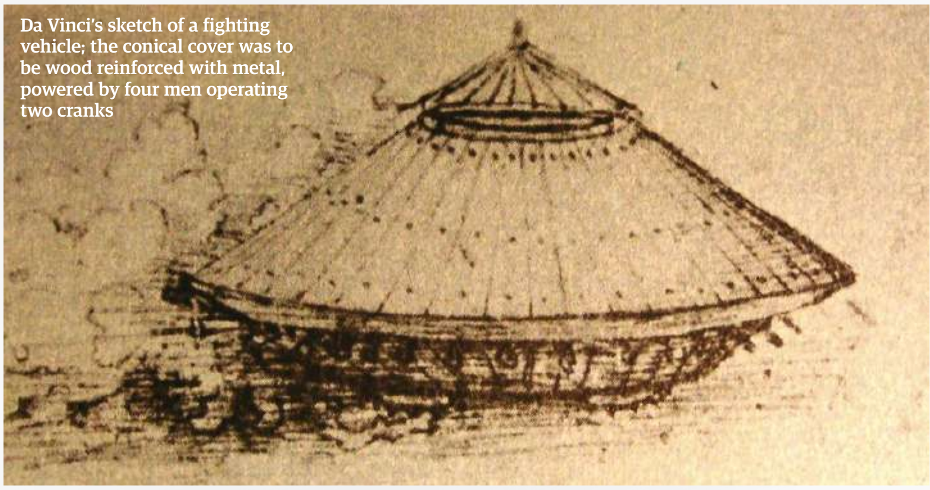
But comparisons fail to do justice to the unique phenomenon that was Leonardo da Vinci. He was, from the start, a philosopher-artist. He read widely and wrote compulsively. He filled notebooks and scraps of paper with sketches and observations, written with his left hand in a backward-sloping script that needs to be read with a mirror. Leonardo made science an art and art a science. He studied anatomy under Antonio del Pollaiolo, the first Florentine to dissect human bodies (an activity frowned upon by the Church). Later in life he returned to this activity with the intention of producing a treatise on anatomy. Someone who saw the work in draft described it as a demonstration; "not only of the members, but also of the muscles, nerves, veins, joints, intestines and of whatever can be reasoned about in the bodies both of men and women in a way that has never yet been done by any other person."

Sadly, this work, if indeed it was ever completed, has not survived. Nature, scientifically observed, measured and recorded, became the runway from which Leonardo's imagination took off. For example, he calculated that there was no reason why man should not fly and he drew the machines that might make this possible.

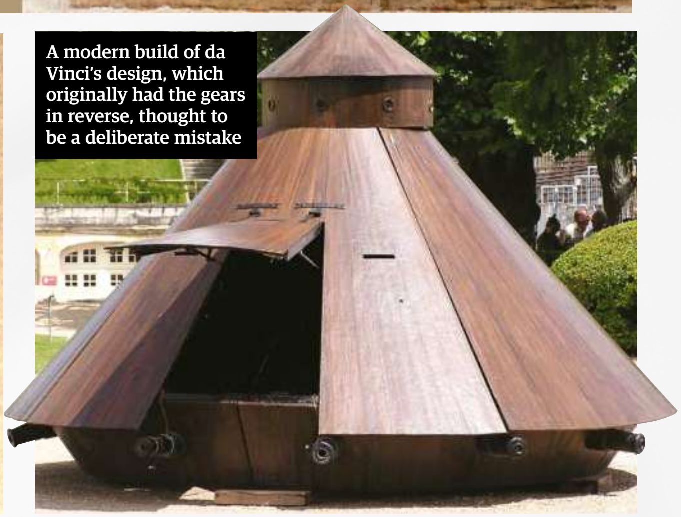
It may well have been Leonardo's unreliability and unconventionality that made necessary his departure from Florence in 1483. We know that he disappointed at least one of his clients. However, Lorenzo de' Medici, the great art patron, recognised the young man's worth and it seems to have been Il Magnifico who recommended Leonardo to his fellow connoisseur, Ludovico Sforza, the Regent of Milan. Ludovico's ambition was not only to make Milan strong and secure, but also to establish it as a cultured state rivalling Florence and Venice.



The Last Supper has not only fuelled the imaginations of artists, it has been used as the basis of religious conspiracy theories



Da Vinci's sketch of a fighting vehicle; the conical cover was to be wood reinforced with metal, powered by four men operating two cranks

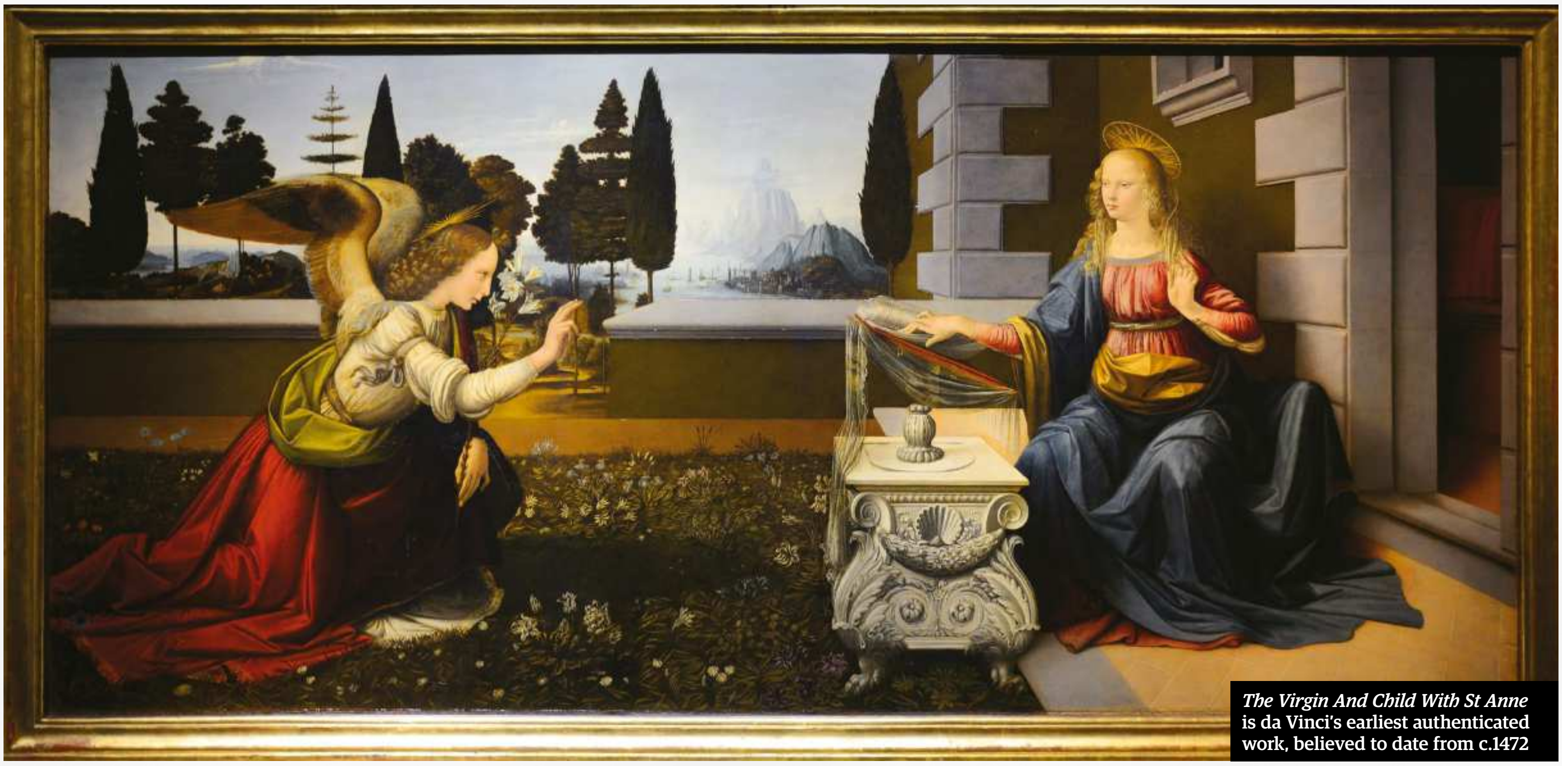


A modern build of da Vinci's design, which originally had the gears in reverse, thought to be a deliberate mistake

Eventually he failed in both but, during the years 1483-1499, he employed Leonardo on projects that were many and varied from cavalcade floats for court entertainments to a design for the dome of Milan Cathedral and an enormous bronze equine statue of Ludovico's father. The dome drawings and statue were never completed, being overcome not only by Leonardo's erratic working habits but also by the troubled events that overtook the dukedom.

Yet it was in Milan that Leonardo's most famous paintings were produced. Soon after his arrival he was hired together with three assistants to provide part of the décor for the main Franciscan church in Milan, San Francesco Grande. Included in the commission was a painting of the Virgin and Child with angels for the chapel of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. The work was bedevilled by difficult relations with the customers and war in Milan; it would take 25 years for the work to be completed (though there would then be two versions of it). Whether or not the friars thought the result was worth waiting for, there is no denying it is one of the most remarkable religious paintings ever made. The conception was startlingly original and the execution breathtakingly brilliant. It has always been known as The *Virgin Of The Rocks*. Mary is depicted with the infants Jesus and John the Baptist attended by an angel in a grotto beside a stretch of water that might be sea or lake. Delicate foliage and flowers offset the craggy rocks. The biblical symbolism involved is complex and repays calm and concentrated contemplation, as was obviously the intention. The two versions are now housed in the Louvre and in the National Gallery, London, though why a copy was made is not known.

The most remarkable large painting - and one Leonardo did actually finish in reasonable time - was *The Last Supper*. It was commissioned by Ludovico in 1494, the year that he achieved full power as Duke of Milan following the death of his young nephew - in suspicious circumstances. The new duke planned to perpetuate the fame of his family by creating a Sforza mausoleum in the church of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie whose community was charged with praying in perpetuity for the souls of the dynasty. Leonardo's contribution was to be a depiction of the



***The Virgin And Child With St Anne* is da Vinci's earliest authenticated work, believed to date from c.1472**

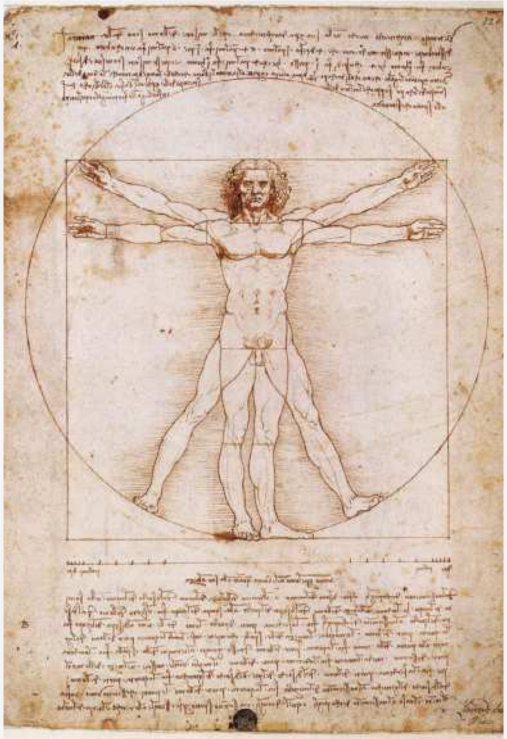
last supper Jesus shared with his closest disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. The innovative approach the artist brought to realising this commission ensured that it was both a triumph and a disaster.

It was a triumph because Leonardo created not just a tableau of a historical event, but a group of psychological studies. He entered into the simple biblical narrative in order to capture the dramatic impact of one single moment. Jesus and the 12 disciples are enjoying an intimate meal until the Master declares, "one of you will betray me." The disciples react in various ways to this shocking prophecy and Leonardo provides what are, in effect, 12 psychological profiles to display their responses. There can be little doubt that the artist intended to draw the members of the convent (and all subsequent beholders) into the story, no longer audience members, but participants, urged to ask themselves, 'Is it I?' Yet there is more to Leonardo's religious theatre. Right in the centre of the composition, seeming almost detached from the impact of his words, Christ indicates the bread that represented his body in the liturgy of the mass. *The Last Supper* represented a gigantic step forward in religious iconography, achieving in paint something that would not otherwise be possible before the development of stage and film dramas.

The Last Supper was a disaster because Leonardo could not stop himself experimenting with painting technique. The method he employed on the refectory wall ensured that this masterpiece had begun to deteriorate within 29 years. We shall never see *The Last Supper* in its full glory.

The very year that Leonardo began work on the painting, his secure life in Milan came under threat. The pope and the King of Naples formed an alliance against Duke Ludovico. He responded by asking Charles VIII of France to come to his aid and encouraging him to lead his army through Milanese territory in order to attack Naples. Thus began the Italian Wars that would rage intermittently for over 60 years. In order to strengthen his position in Italy, Charles decided to annexe Milan. In 1498, Ludovico was defeated in war by his former ally. Two years later he was captured and imprisoned in France, where he died in 1508.

The unsettled life Leonardo lived after his hurried departure from Milan in 1499 was a further distraction for a man easily distracted, and he completed few paintings in his last years. But his importance in Renaissance art, thought and life does not depend on the few completed paintings that have survived. His influence was profound. Fellow artists revered him for his constant, daring innovation. The late work, *Madonna And St Anne*, with its revolutionary interweaving of figures had a profound influence on Michelangelo, Raphael and others. But it is in the considerable collection of drawings, which Leonardo regraded as more important, that bring us closer to the thinking of a great Renaissance genius.



***The Vitruvian Man* (c.1490) is based on Vitruvius's theories of ideal human proportions**

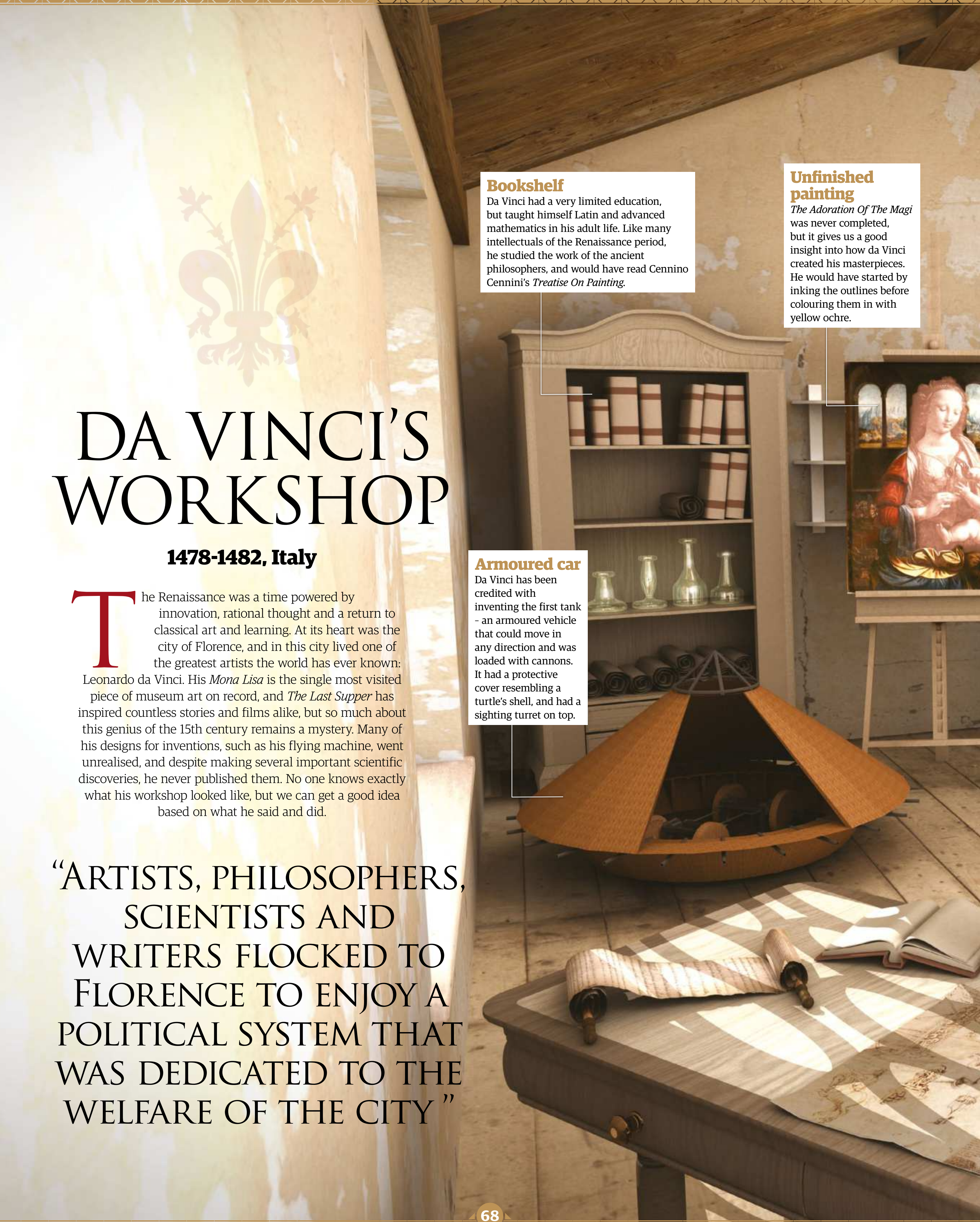
> "HE ENTERED INTO THE SIMPLE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE IN ORDER TO CAPTURE THE DRAMATIC IMPACT OF ONE SINGLE MOMENT"

DA VINCI'S WORKSHOP

1478-1482, Italy

The Renaissance was a time powered by innovation, rational thought and a return to classical art and learning. At its heart was the city of Florence, and in this city lived one of the greatest artists the world has ever known: Leonardo da Vinci. His *Mona Lisa* is the single most visited piece of museum art on record, and *The Last Supper* has inspired countless stories and films alike, but so much about this genius of the 15th century remains a mystery. Many of his designs for inventions, such as his flying machine, went unrealised, and despite making several important scientific discoveries, he never published them. No one knows exactly what his workshop looked like, but we can get a good idea based on what he said and did.

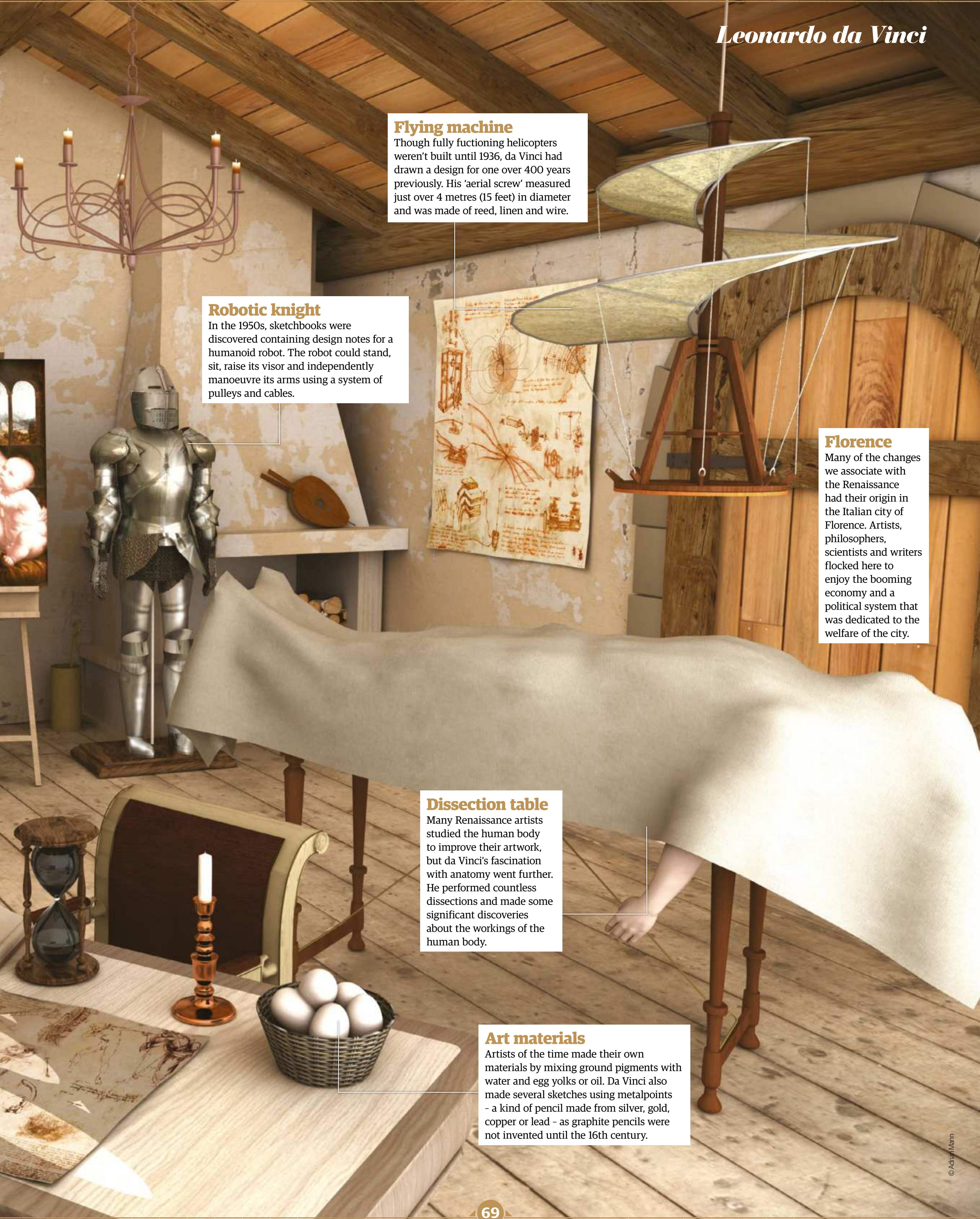
> "ARTISTS, PHILOSOPHERS, SCIENTISTS AND WRITERS FLOCKED TO FLORENCE TO ENJOY A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT WAS DEDICATED TO THE WELFARE OF THE CITY"



Bookshelf
Da Vinci had a very limited education, but taught himself Latin and advanced mathematics in his adult life. Like many intellectuals of the Renaissance period, he studied the work of the ancient philosophers, and would have read Cennino Cennini's *Treatise On Painting*.

Unfinished painting
The Adoration Of The Magi was never completed, but it gives us a good insight into how da Vinci created his masterpieces. He would have started by inking the outlines before colouring them in with yellow ochre.

Armoured car
Da Vinci has been credited with inventing the first tank – an armoured vehicle that could move in any direction and was loaded with cannons. It had a protective cover resembling a turtle's shell, and had a sighting turret on top.



Flying machine

Though fully fuctioning helicopters weren't built until 1936, da Vinci had drawn a design for one over 400 years previously. His 'aerial screw' measured just over 4 metres (15 feet) in diameter and was made of reed, linen and wire.

Robotic knight

In the 1950s, sketchbooks were discovered containing design notes for a humanoid robot. The robot could stand, sit, raise its visor and independently manoeuvre its arms using a system of pulleys and cables.

Florence

Many of the changes we associate with the Renaissance had their origin in the Italian city of Florence. Artists, philosophers, scientists and writers flocked here to enjoy the booming economy and a political system that was dedicated to the welfare of the city.

Dissection table

Many Renaissance artists studied the human body to improve their artwork, but da Vinci's fascination with anatomy went further. He performed countless dissections and made some significant discoveries about the workings of the human body.

Art materials

Artists of the time made their own materials by mixing ground pigments with water and egg yolks or oil. Da Vinci also made several sketches using metalpoints – a kind of pencil made from silver, gold, copper or lead – as graphite pencils were not invented until the 16th century.

© Adrian Mann

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

Considered a master of manipulation, was Machiavelli a conniving political exile or a misunderstood, disillusioned satirist?

Hailed as the father of modern politics, Niccolò Machiavelli has long been synonymous with everything bad about the political sphere. His name, turned adjective as 'Machiavellian', conjures up images of a cunning, sly and manipulative figure, hell-bent on achieving their own goals regardless of the means of getting there. But was the man behind the legend really as cruel as his legacy makes out?

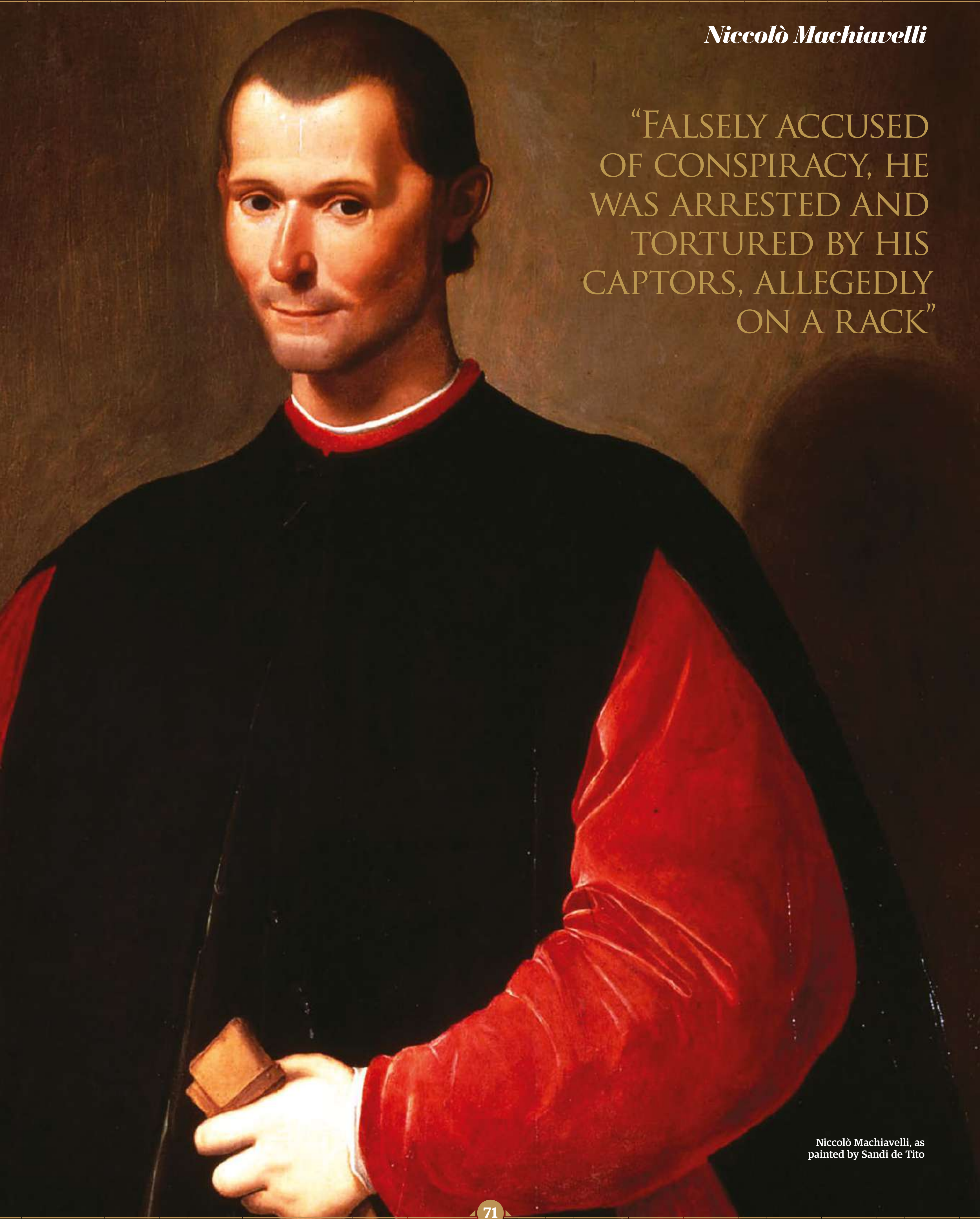
Interestingly, Machiavelli's reputation varies from country to country. Tarred as a schemer, he has gone down in English-speaking history as the first of the slimy, slippery politicians - yet in his home nation of Italy, any notion of this historical bias is shed and the man is seen for what he really was: an innovator whose views were far ahead of his time - by 500 years, in fact. To this day, Machiavelli's philosophical insights into the world of politics have shaped modern ruling, and his observations are just as relevant as they were in the 15th century.

Born in 1469, little is known of Machiavelli's childhood except that he grew up on his father's estate on the outskirts of Florence, where he received an education fit for an up-and-coming Florentine diplomat. A centre of philosophical thinking, Florence provided Machiavelli with an exceptional humanist education. But this hub of culture was in a perpetual state of tumult. Florence had served as the origin of the Italian Renaissance less than a century before, and with the rise of the Medici family in the early 1400s, the city prospered and grew. Yet as Florence thrived under Cosimo de' Medici, the state faced constant strife with its neighbouring districts, while on the horizon, foreign invasion looked imminent. Enduring peace was a distant dream. By 1494, the Medici had been expelled from Florence, and it was in this harsh, unstable environment that Machiavelli thrived.

In 1498, the intellectual attended sermons and speeches by Girolamo Savonarola, a preacher whose views went against the grain. Savonarola preached against the corruption of the pope, among other topics, and was hanged later that year, accused of being a heretic. Just a few days after Savonarola's execution, Machiavelli found himself in charge of Florence's foreign affairs as the head of the second chancery. How exactly this young man entered such a high position in government without known prior experience confounds historians to this day, but his tenure lasted until 1512, when the Medici returned to power.

During the eight years that the Medici family were exiled, Machiavelli's political career went from strength to strength. He won the favour of the chief magistrate (Gonfaloniere), Piero Soderini, whom he convinced to found a militia in 1505, which helped reduced the city's reliance on mercenaries. Created by Soderini, the militia was run by Machiavelli. On top of this, Machiavelli made visits to renowned figures, including Cesare Borgia (whose political prowess influenced much of Machiavelli's early writing, and later inspired part of his most notorious work, *The Prince*), Charles VIII of France and several reigning popes of their time.

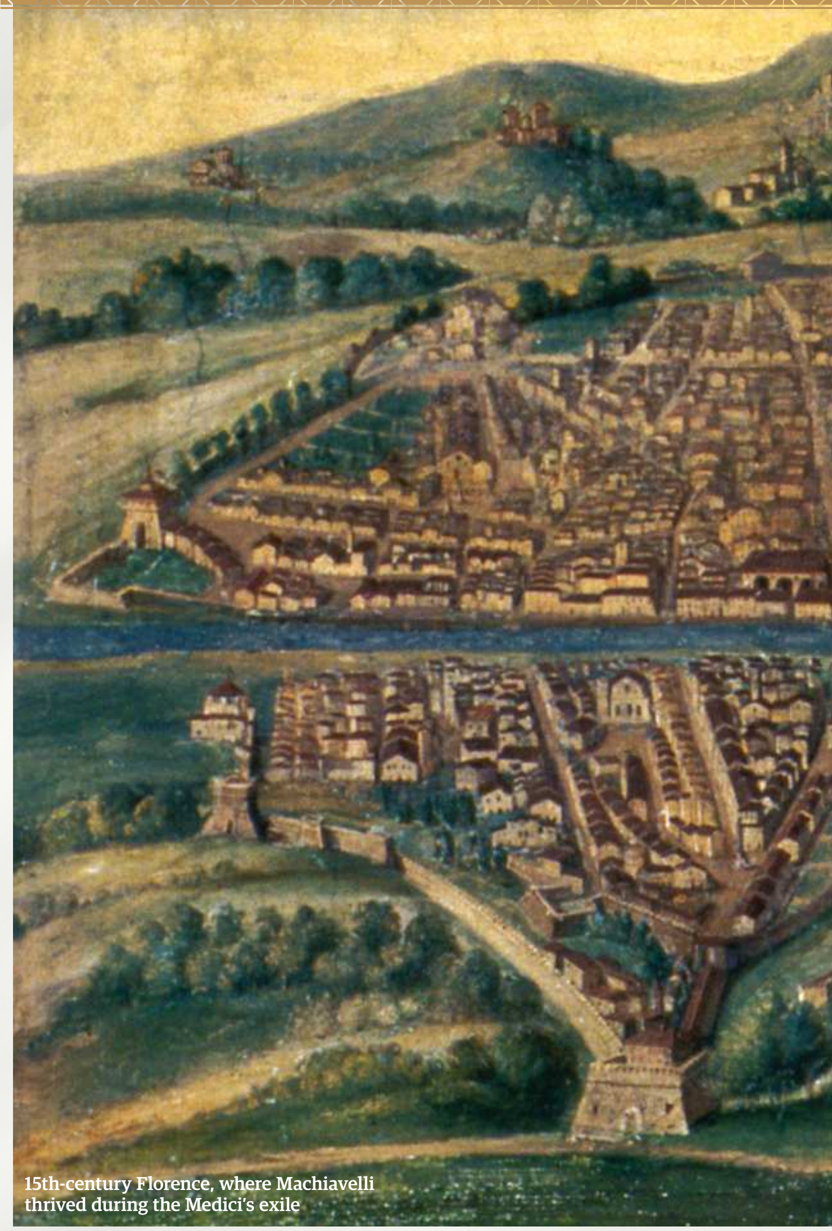
It was in 1503 that Machiavelli began to write seriously. His poem - the first *Decennali*, which was part one of a two-part poetry epic on the history of Florence - was finished a year later. Yet behind the scenes of Machiavelli's high-flying diplomatic career



“FALSELY ACCUSED OF CONSPIRACY, HE WAS ARRESTED AND TORTURED BY HIS CAPTORS, ALLEGEDLY ON A RACK”

Niccolò Machiavelli, as painted by Sandi de Tito

Revered in Italy, a statue of Machiavelli stands outside the Uffizi Gallery in Florence


15th-century Florence, where Machiavelli thrived during the Medici's exile

> "WHILE IN LIFE HE FAILED AS A POLITICIAN, MACHIAVELLI'S WRITINGS HAVE INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF LEADERS – BOTH GOOD AND BAD"

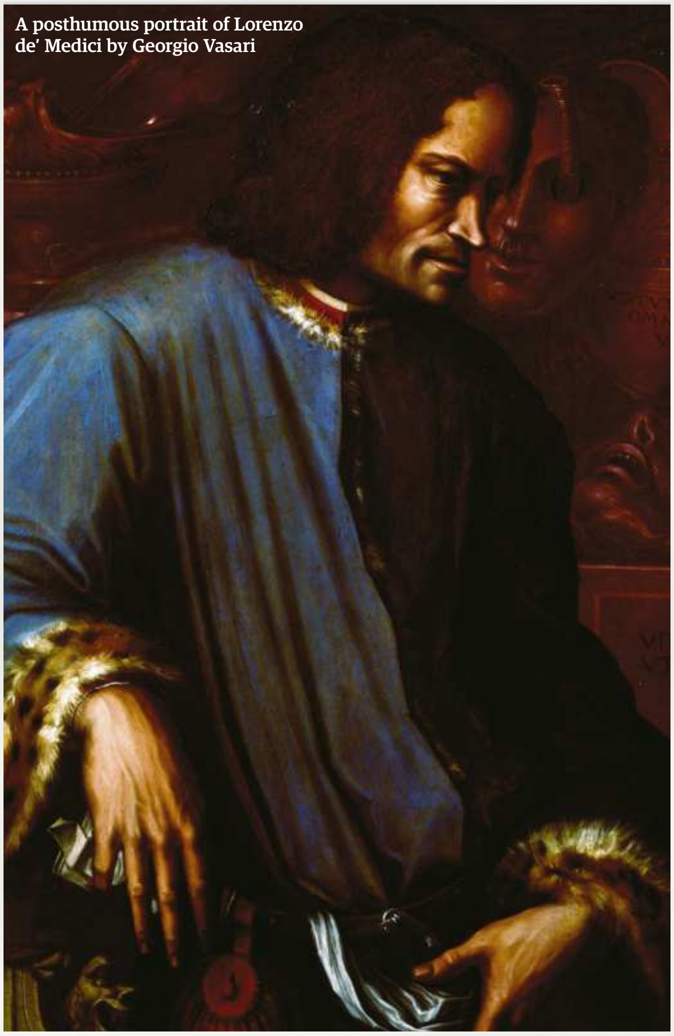
there were cunning forces at work. Pope Julius II had enlisted Spain in his war against France under the Holy League and, in early September, he commanded his general, Ramón de Cardona, to seize Florence. With that achievement, the House of Medici was restored.

This spelled catastrophe for Machiavelli. Falsely accused of conspiracy, he was arrested and tortured by his captors, allegedly on a rack. He fiercely denied any involvement in the plots against the Medici family, but despite his protestations of innocence Machiavelli was kept imprisoned. Yet fortune was on the diplomat's side, as Pope Julius II died in February the following year. Under the new pope, Leo X - who incidentally hailed from the line of ruling Medici - celebrations were organised and an amnesty was agreed. Machiavelli was free. The cost, however, was dear - he was banned from the city of Florence and ordered to retire to his family estate on the outskirts of the city. It was during this exile that Machiavelli began to pen his most famous works, including the controversial comment on politics that still rings true to this day, *The Prince*.

Confined to his estate outside of Florence, Machiavelli pondered how to weave his way back in to the political landscape of the city and came to a conclusion: he would write a guide to politics as he had experienced it during his diplomatic career. In 1513, he completed *The Prince* and dedicated it to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the newly proclaimed ruler of Florence and head of the Medici family. To this day, the exact purpose of the dedication is debated - was it to flatter the ruler in an attempt to have himself reinstated, or was it an intellectual satire, mocking the politics of the city from which he had been exiled?

Either way, the book was enough to cause scandal when it was published in 1532, five years after Machiavelli's death. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli split his work in to two parts - the first was devoted to methods of gaining power, while the second (and arguably most important) section offered advice on how to hold on to power when you had it. It was this book and its controversial statements for which Machiavelli is best remembered - and not fondly. Aside from providing a description of the qualities that any ruler should have, *The Prince* also posed a very serious moral question: was it better to keep your moral integrity intact and lose power, or to compromise, using your cunning and wit, regardless of the method, in order to achieve your goals?

Two chapters in particular fanned the flames of controversy. In Chapter 18, entitled 'Concerning The Way In Which Princes Keep Faith', Machiavelli wrote that while it is admirable to attempt to be a virtuous ruler, sometimes it is necessary to employ less-than-moral means to succeed; that for



A posthumous portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici by Georgio Vasari

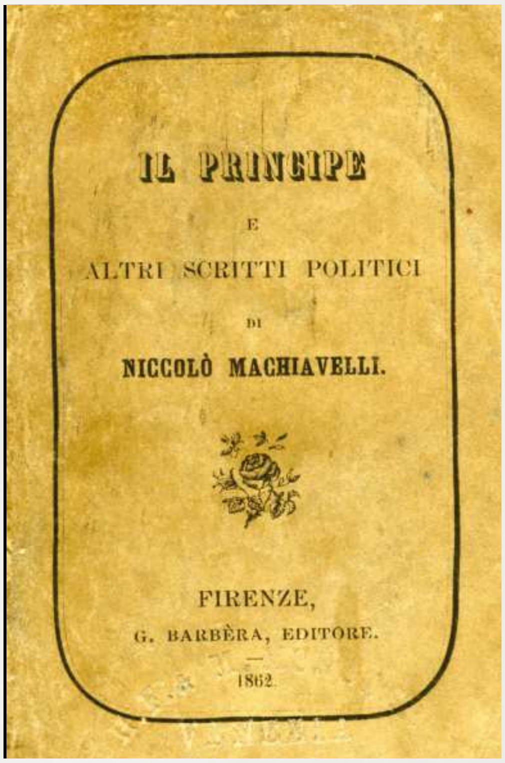
the sake of ultimate good, sometimes you need to be bad. Here, Machiavelli claimed, "A prince being thus obliged to know well how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten wolves."

Chapter Seven, titled 'Concerning New Principalities Which Are Acquired Either By The Arms Of Others Or By Good Fortune', also appalled readers. Machiavelli seemed to advocate murder as he recounted the story of the Duke of Valentinois, Cesare Borgia, conquering Cesena in Romagna. Having employed Remirro de Orco as his deputy, Borgia commanded him to pacify and subdue the town with force, and he used brutal tactics, such as beheadings and castrations, to bring peace to the region. The town was tamed but the residents despised Orco, so Borgia had his deputy cut in half and displayed in the town piazza in order to curry favour. With the brutality over, Borgia reduced taxation and invested in the town through the creation of a theatre and carnival. This was served up as the perfect example of where the ends (ultimate peace, protection and prosperity for his people) justified the means (mass murder and mutilation).

After completing *The Prince*, Machiavelli moved on to other writings, including *Discourses On Livy*, *Art Of War* and *The Mandrake Root*, among others. If *The Prince* really was a cunning ploy to impress, then it never fulfilled its purpose. In all likeliness, Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici never read Machiavelli's masterpiece, and until his death in 1527 at the age of 58, the exiled politician remained confined to his estate, never to return to the political sphere.

Yet while in life he failed as a politician, Machiavelli's writings have inspired generations of leaders - both good and bad. Among the tyrants and dictators of contemporary history who studied *The Prince* - including Stalin and Mussolini - the work has inspired some of modern culture's most iconic creators, including George RR Martin, the author of the books that inspired TV fantasy series *Game Of Thrones*.

To this day, Machiavelli's writings remain relevant - perhaps more so in today's political climate than ever before. The rules of power haven't changed in over 500 years of politics. What has changed are the faces that mask the true nature of being a politician - those shrewd, Machiavellian schemers that embody the truths of Machiavelli's writing - but perhaps that's not such a bad thing.



IL PRINCIPE

E

ALTRI SCRITTI POLITICI

DI

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI.

FIRENZE,

G. BARBÈRA, EDITORE.

1862.

The Prince **was titled and published five years after Machiavelli's death**

© Alamy, TopFoto

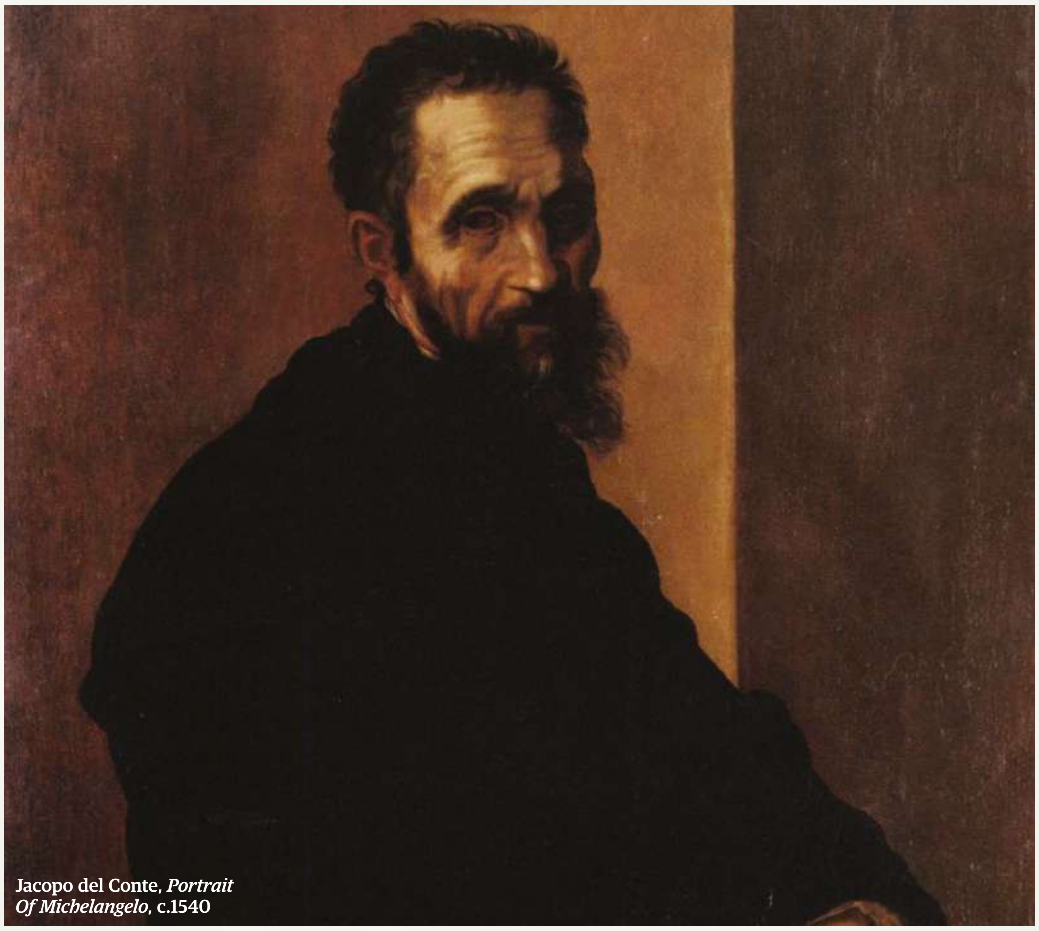
MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

Michelangelo Buonarroti was to become the dominant personality of the High Renaissance in Florence (where he surpassed even Leonardo da Vinci) and Rome

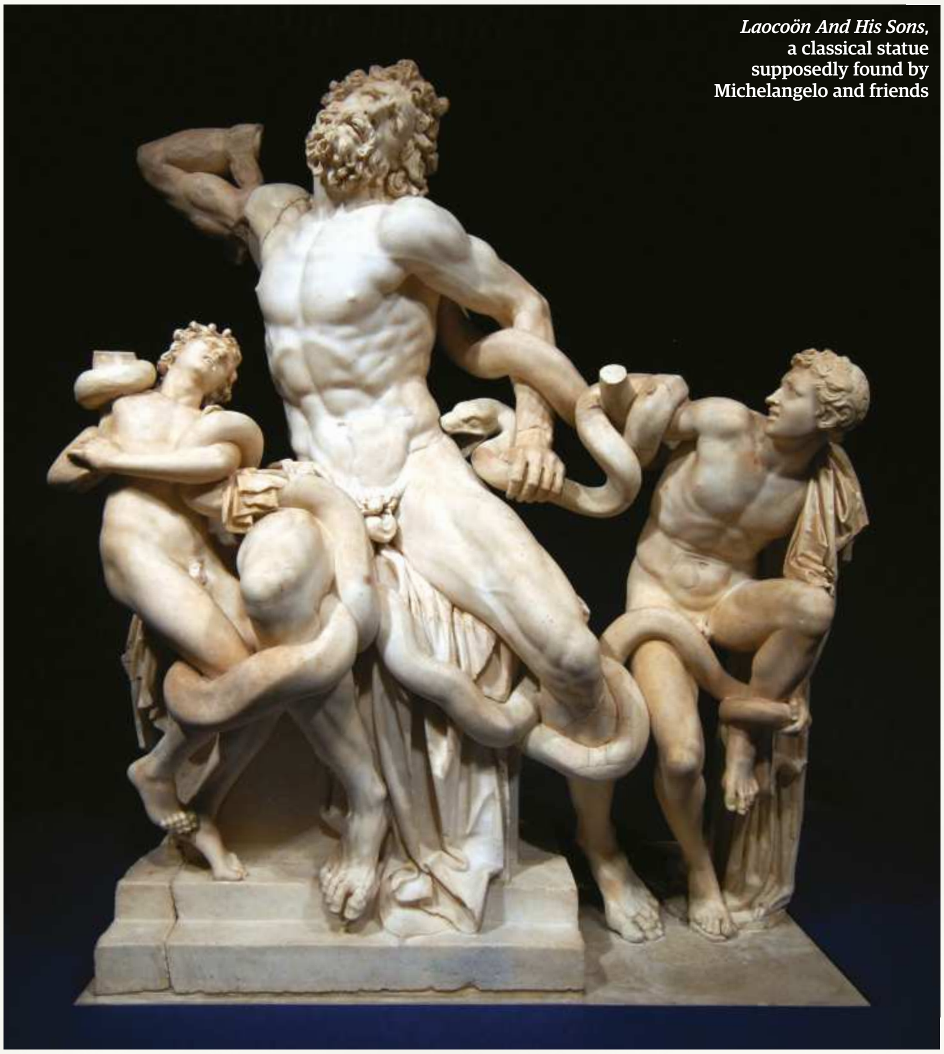
Words **Derek Wilson**

His future was laid out for him almost from birth, not because he came from a family of artists, but because he grew up in a village of stonecutters in the hills near Florence. From a young age he was fascinated by the qualities of marble - the structure, the grain, the solidity that still yielded to the mason's tools. He could 'see' the image embedded in the rock and thought of sculpture not as making something out of the natural material, but setting free the entity placed there by the Creator. So evident was Michelangelo's talent that his reluctant father allowed him to be apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandaio, the most successful and prosperous artist in Florence, who presided over several trainees in his bustling workshop.

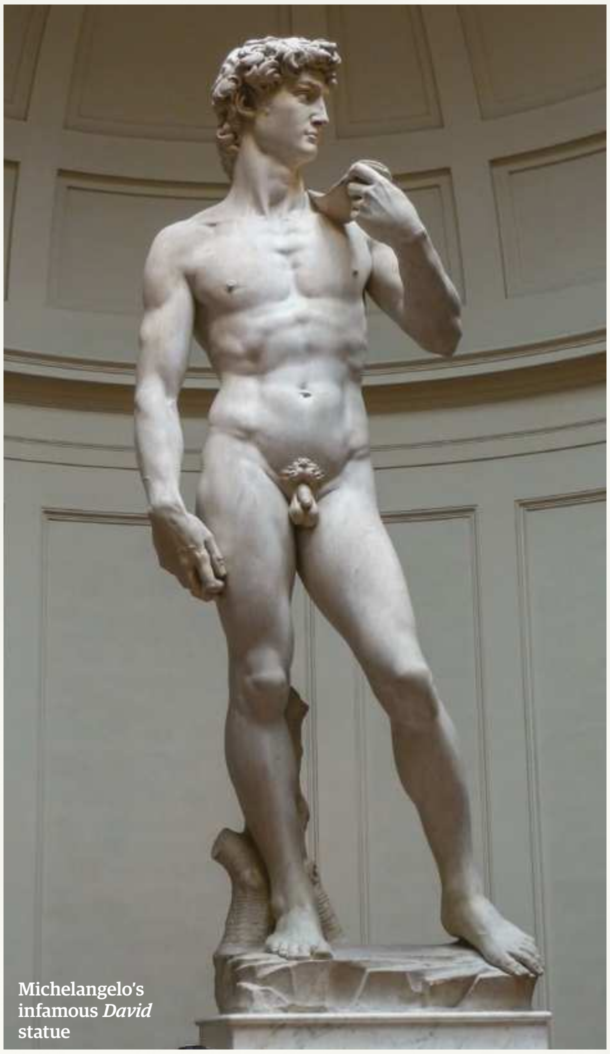
Michelangelo spent only a year in this creative environment before moving on to something still more prestigious. Lorenzo de' Medici, the 'Magnificent', maintained his own private school for fostering promising young artists. Thus, before he was out of his teens, Michelangelo was moving in the most exalted cultural and political circles in Florence, where the latest philosophical theories were being discussed. Yet he was always something of a loner. The obsessive vision of perfection that kept him at work all the daylight hours and filled his mind much of the night, was a form of self-exile. He had a reputation for being arrogant, 'difficult' and even aggressive. On one



Jacopo del Conte, *Portrait Of Michelangelo*, c.1540



Laocoön And His Sons, a classical statue supposedly found by Michelangelo and friends



Michelangelo's infamous *David* statue

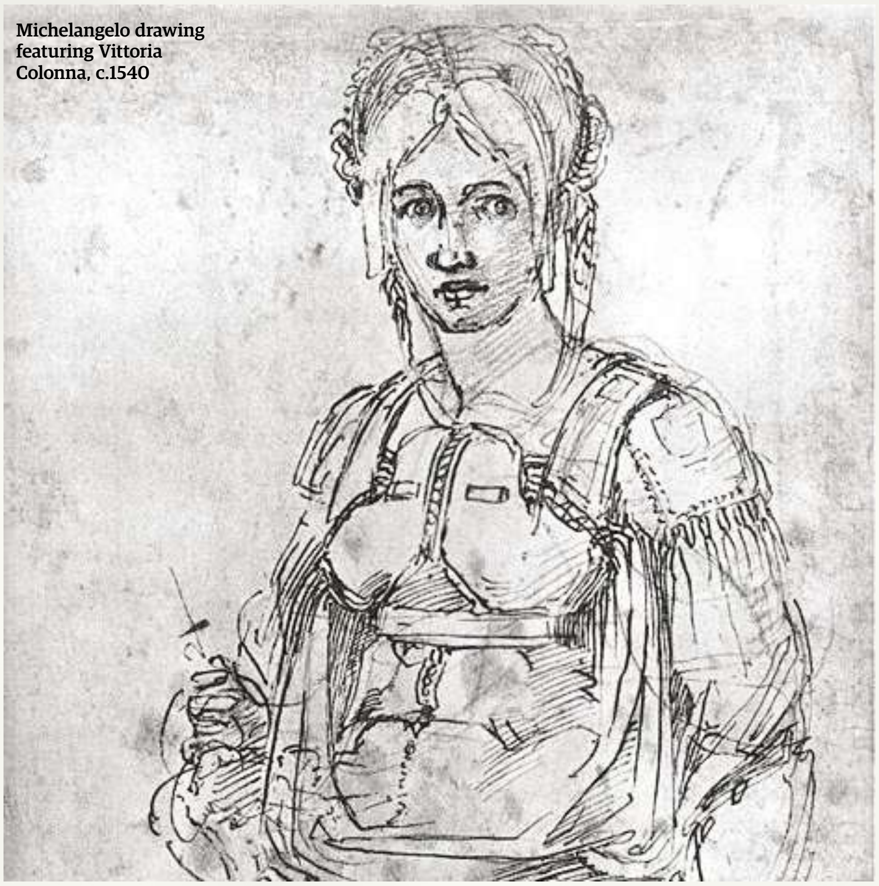
occasion he got into a fight with fellow artist, Pietro Torrigiano, and during the altercation sustained a broken nose which never reset properly. Soon afterwards Torrigiano ended up at the court of Henry VII in England.

Michelangelo was deeply religious and this shows in one of his early works. The *Pietà* was commissioned by a cardinal in 1498 as part of the furnishing of St Peter's, Rome. It was a truly astonishing accomplishment for a young man still in his early twenties. His close studies of the nude had given him a detailed understanding of the human form. But the image of Mary with her dead son was more than just a pair of accurately observed figures. Michelangelo often said that it was his intention to lift the 'mortal veil' with which God had clothed his creatures, in order to reveal the soul within. In the moving *Pietà*, he certainly achieved that.

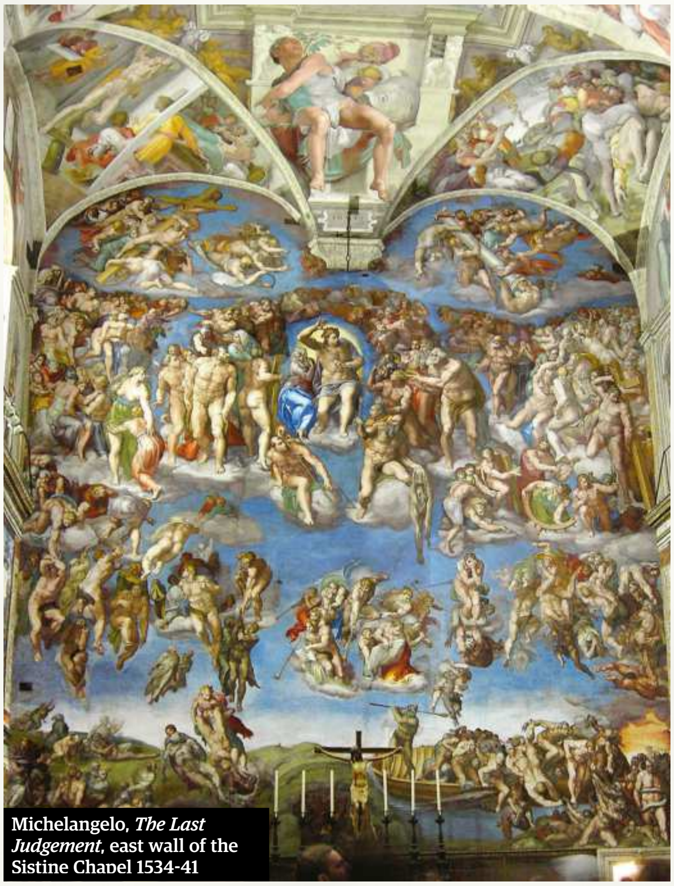
Michelangelo stands out in the history of art for many reasons but the most important is his 'rediscovery' of the human form. The bodies of men and women (not forgetting children, who were often the models for angels and putti) had, of course, always been represented in sculpture and painting, both clothed and unclothed, but not until Michelangelo appeared do we find an artist who delighted in the human form and treated it with reverence. This was why, although he was a great painter, he preferred the 3D impact of sculpture. He stated his preference quite clearly: 'The nearer painting approaches sculpture the better it is… sculpture is worse the nearer it approaches painting." Earlier artists had never achieved full understanding of anatomy, partly because of a certain reserve in displaying nakedness. In religious works the figures of Christ, saints, martyrs and biblical figures were shown with sexual organs discreetly covered. Michelangelo was contemptuous of this reserve. He drew inspiration from the pagan art of ancient Greece and Rome. For this he was censured by some members of the religious establishment. But his bold presentation of the human form was not a rebellion against prudery; his attitude towards bodies was a part of his personal piety. Men and women had been created in the image of God. Therefore, there was something glorious, even holy, about their appearance. Indeed, a sense of shame about the naked body was a result of the Fall: Adam and Eve had only thought to cover their nakedness after they had sinned by eating the forbidden fruit.

> "HIS PRESENTATION OF THE HUMAN FORM WAS NOT A REBELLION AGAINST PRUDERY… IT WAS A PART OF HIS PERSONAL PIETY"

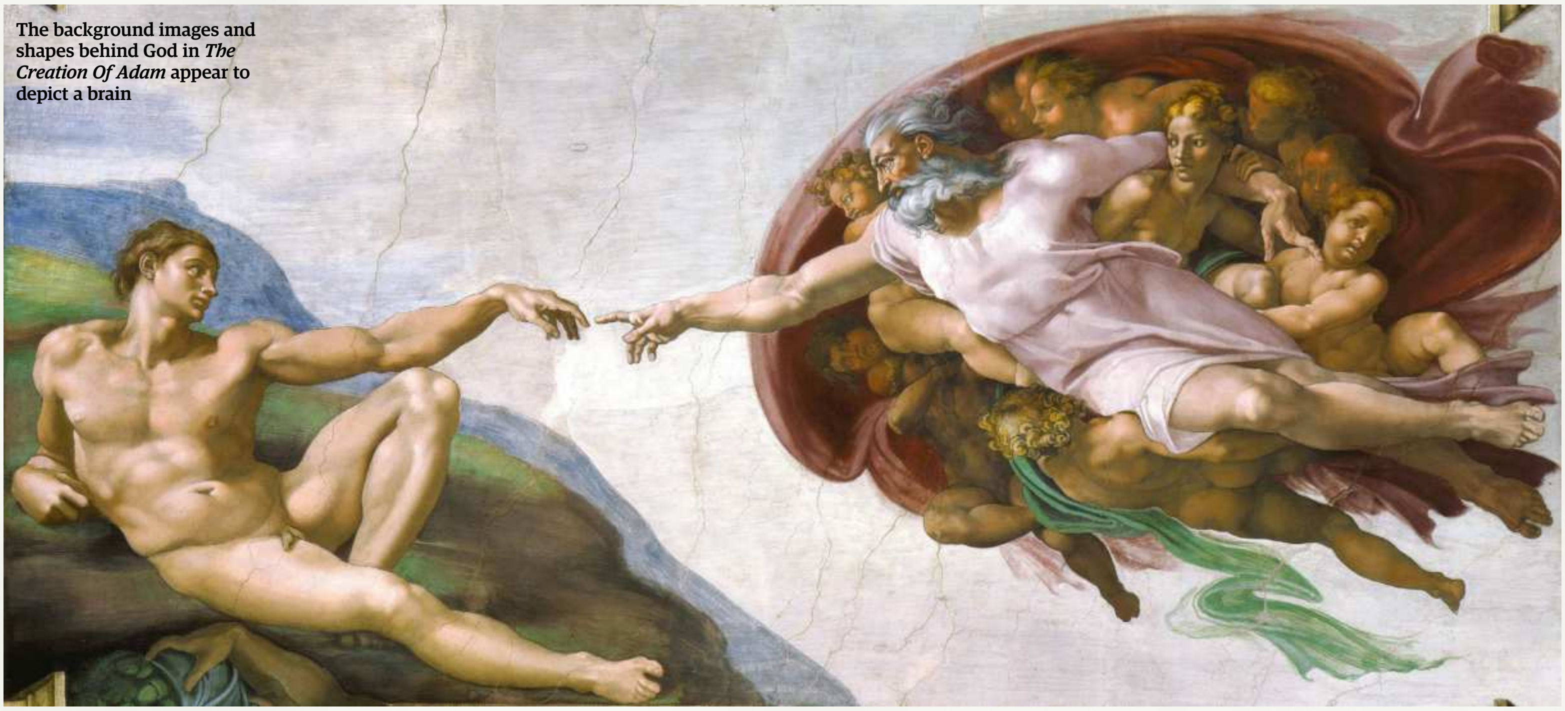
Michelangelo avidly studied bodies - surviving classical statues as well as live models. He was also assisted by being able to observe anatomical dissection. Although this, too, was frowned on in some quarters, physicians and artists were



Michelangelo drawing featuring Vittoria Colonna, c.1540



Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, east wall of the Sistine Chapel 1534-41

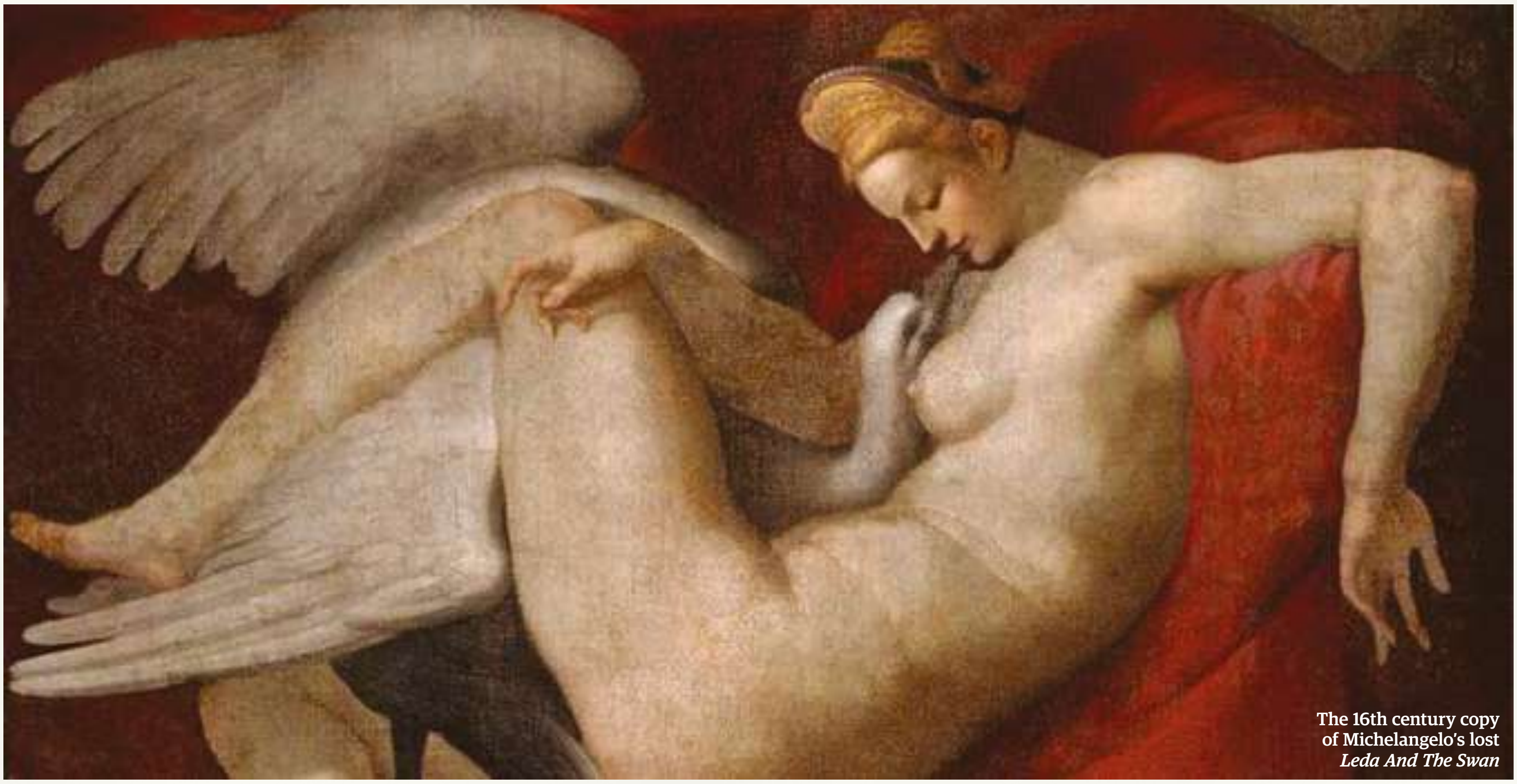


The background images and shapes behind God in *The Creation Of Adam* appear to depict a brain

examining actual corpses to see how bones, muscles, arteries and nerves actually worked.

There has been much speculation about his sexuality. He was one of those rare mortals whose genius 'imprisoned' them, restricting conventional relationships. He admired male beauty and, particularly in later life, had relationships with younger men. Whether these were homoerotic we cannot know. He was necessarily circumspect about them; such relationships were condemned by the Church. They were, however, not uncommon and prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts were rare. Neo-classical philosophers exalted the teaching of Plato, which idealised non-physical same-sex love (Platonic love) as a way of transcending the material world and ascending to the divine. When he was in his sixties, Michelangelo formed a close attachment to Vittoria Colonna, a younger woman who was a leading intellectual, poet, philosopher, theologian and radical thinker, and who advocated a spirituality akin to that of the major Protestant reformers. In a drawing commemorating their friendship, Michelangelo depicted her as the Madonna lamenting the death of Christ.

But, to return to the closing years of the 15th century, Michelangelo's greatest sculpture of this



The 16th century copy of Michelangelo's lost *Leda And The Swan*

period was the massive nude study of *David*. This statue had a somewhat chequered history. Long before Michelangelo was born, a huge block of marble was delivered to Florence Cathedral for the sculptor Agostino di Duccio to create a figure for incorporation in the building, but he abandoned the project and the stone stood outside the church for almost four decades until the government offered the commission to Michelangelo. He completed the statue in 1504 but its adventures had not yet come to an end. It became the victim, first of political conflict and later, of the weather. Florence's leaders argued about where to put it and when it was finally moved into position, it was pelted with stones by a pro-Medici mob. In a later confrontation of rival factions, the statue's left arm was broken. The damage was eventually repaired but, because the location had been badly chosen, the statue would go on to suffer over succeeding centuries from wind and rain.

In 1505 Michelangelo was summoned to Rome by Pope Julius II to design and create a grandiloquent tomb that would proclaim his greatness to all later generations. Michelangelo threw himself into this prestigious project but political and other factors intervened and, when the work did not proceed as the artist wanted, he stormed out in a rage and returned to his home city. Julius ordered him to return, not only to continue to resume his labours on the tomb but also to take up a mammoth painting project. He wanted a series of panels for the ceiling of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo and Julius were both strong characters but the marvel that is the Sistine Chapel was the child of their stormy relationship. Julius, the 'warrior pope' was dedicated to creating a new, rebuilt Rome as the symbol of a papacy that was re-asserting its political power. The design for the ceiling was a complex series of biblical narratives involving around 300 figures. The artist worked at it for four years, behind locked doors in the utmost secrecy, because he did not want anyone to see the unfinished ceiling with its dramatic realisation of Old Testament stories from the Creation to incidents in the life of David as well as representations of prophets and sybils. The scope, the detail, the colour, the figures so lifelike they seemed about to move, as Vasari said, "reduced observers to stunned silence" and the conception and its realisation immediately influenced the work of other artists. Twenty-five years later, at the behest of Pope Clement VII, Michelangelo crowned his work in the Sistine Chapel with a depiction of the Last Judgement for the east wall. The theme was a common one, having adorned many medieval churches, but the treatment by the artists was a novel one. All the figures – whether mortal, heavenly or hellish – were depicted as nude humans, displaying a wide range of emotions. This caused a long-running protest in Church circles and, soon after the artist's death, the genitalia of the figures were discreetly covered with draperies. The censors saw the religious subject as debased by classical paganism. Michelangelo's vision was just the opposite: Christian truth made comprehensible by classical realism.

> "THE ARTIST WORKED AT IT FOR FOUR YEARS… IN THE UTMOST SECRECY, BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT ANYONE… TO SEE THE UNFINISHED CEILING"

Michelangelo never finished the tomb of Pope Julius. He was prodigiously busy. As well as numerous sculptures, he produced designs for the dome of St Peter's Basilica and oversaw the extensive rebuilding of the Palazzo Farnese, regarded as the most imposing High Renaissance palace in Italy. The artist's workload is all the more remarkable when it is realised that he seldom employed assistants.

Michelangelo Buonarroti died in Rome in 1564 at the remarkable age of 88. Pope Pius IV wanted Rome to keep him and decreed that he should be buried in the Vatican, but the artist's wishes were ultimately respected and his body was returned to Florence. Vasari, who designed his tomb, wrote of him, "he was sent into the world to be an example to men of art, that they should learn from his life and from his works."

HOW WAS THE SISTINE CHAPEL'S CEILING PAINTED?

Explore the tools and techniques behind Michelangelo's lofty Renaissance masterpiece

In painting the Sistine Chapel's ceiling in the early part of the 16th century, Michelangelo had to overcome a number of daunting hurdles. The first comes directly from the physical properties of the ceiling, as it is a barrel vault, which is a curved surface. To make it more difficult still, that barrel vault is intersected with smaller vaults positioned over the windows. As such there are no flat surfaces anywhere except around the windows, where the artist also painted a series of half moon-shaped lunettes. As a result, even prior to picking up a paintbrush Michelangelo had to first work out how to create realistic portrayals of human figures in proper proportion and in motion on these wildly uneven surfaces. His ability to pull this off is testament to his immense artistic skill.

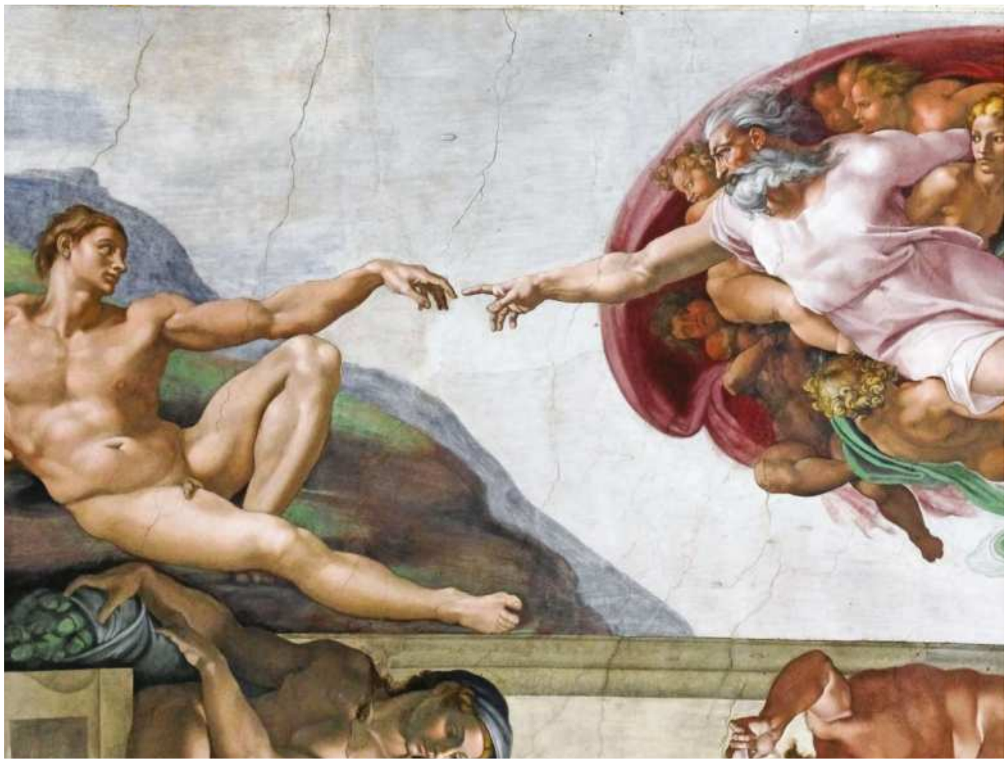
Another major challenge in painting the Sistine Chapel's ceiling was actually getting up there, as it is 20 metres (65 feet) above the floor. Fortunately, a conservation campaign that started in the Eighties revealed the method Michelangelo employed to reach such heights: he constructed a complex scaffold. The scaffold consisted of a truss bridge that spanned across the vault and ran on rails that were at a 90-degree angle to the walls. This permitted Michelangelo to access all areas of the ceiling as the scaffolding could be moved along the rails - it was only ever covering a quarter of the vault at any one time, as he needed ambient light from the windows to paint. Interestingly, the holes that supported this structure can still be seen in the walls to this day.

The third problem Michelangelo had to tackle was how to lay out the sketch lines for the entire ceiling. He did this by dividing the vault into various units by stretching chalked strings from one end of the chapel to the other (with help from assistants), before snapping them against the prepared plaster. In doing this, he laid out the linear structure of all the architecture, which is consistent throughout.

The last major obstacle that Michelangelo faced was the sheer scale of the project, which incredibly only took four years to complete. Painting the ceiling was a massive logistical undertaking and so he invited some of his friends from Florence to Rome to aid him.

As well as painting some of the recurring elements, such as columns and statues, these assistants helped Michelangelo build the scaffolding and mix/prepare the plaster, as well as lending a hand with the manufacture of paints, the trimming of paintbrushes and the sketching of full-sized drawings on paper for transferral onto the vault. This latter process involved the paper sketch being pressed against the ceiling, pricked with small holes around the outlines and then covered with black chalk dust to produce a dotted outline on the plaster.

The Sistine Chapel's ceiling today post-restoration. In terms of colour, this is very close to how it would have looked when painted originally



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KEY DATES

SISTINE CHAPEL

1480
Pope Sixtus IV (right) commissions the Sistine Chapel to be constructed.

1508
Michelangelo begins work painting the chapel's ceiling.

1512
Michelangelo completes his painting of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling (right).

1979
Preliminary analysis and tests are conducted to assess the feasibility of a restoration project.

1984
Restoration of the Sistine Chapel commences.

1994
The Sistine Chapel is finally re-opened to the public post-restoration.

RAPHAEL

One of the most 'human' of the humanist Renaissance artists, Raphael's works display not just technical skill, nor just genius, but love

Words **Derek Wilson**

He was born Raffaello Santi, the son of Giovanni Santi, court painter to the duke of Urbino, a hilltop town on the eastern slopes of the Appenines. It commanded extensive views over fields, woods and vineyards that were dear to the growing boy, and landscape would always play a major part in his artistic output. His was a comfortable and highly favoured upbringing, for the Montefeltro family who ruled from the magnificent ducal palace were generous and enlightened patrons of the arts.

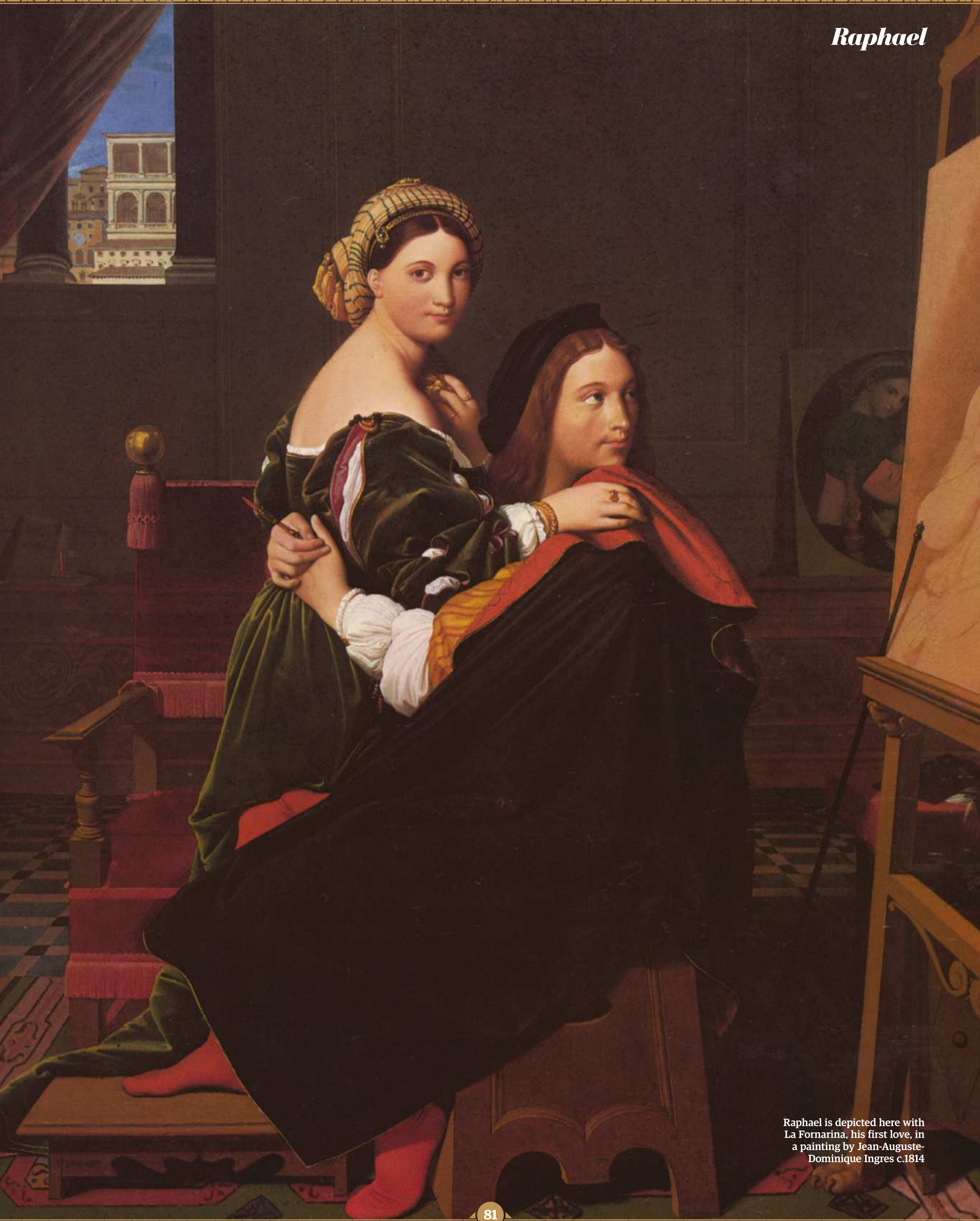
They thought highly of Giovanni and paid him well. An important change was underway in master-and-servant relationships in the 15th-century city-states of North Italy. In earlier times artists had been mere hired artisans hired - usually by churchmen - to carry out their employers' wishes, but now enlightened rulers valued painters, architects, sculptors and scholars more highly. Talented protégés embellished a prince's court and enhanced his prestige. Cultivating the arts of peace was valued as highly as developing the weapons of war. Men like Giovanni Santi were valued, not just for their technical skills, but for their ideas, their knowledge of the latest fashions. Giovanni and his family were housed in a commodious house in the centre of Urbino. But Raphael's early years were not without difficulties. His mother died when he was eight and his father followed her to the grave when the boy was 11. Raphael's talent was already obvious and he was placed by his uncle and guardian in the workshop of Pietro Perugino, who maintained busy ateliers in Perugia and Florence. There could have been no better time for Raphael to learn his craft, for this was the period we now known as the 'High Renaissance'. Painters, architects and all kinds of craftsmen were much in demand, as Church leaders and civic rulers competed to decorate their houses, public buildings and places of worship with works of art in the latest style. Commissions in plenty from discerning patrons meant that artists had opportunity to develop their skills and explore new ideas. Raphael's reputation grew and, by the age of 17, he was attracting patrons on his own account.

Like most artists, he led a peripatetic life, executing an altarpiece here, a fresco there and the portrait of a courtier somewhere else. However, thanks to the wealth generated by trade, it was in Florence that there were many generous patrons ready to commission new works for their churches, houses and civic buildings. This was where the now-independent Raphael lived from 1504 to 1508, throwing himself into his work with all the vigour of youth. This was where he absorbed and made his own the new classicism. Giorgio Vasari who, in 1550, published *Lives Of The Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors And Architects*, described a discussion group which met regularly in the studio of the architect Baccio d'Agnolo. "Among the foremost attenders," he wrote, "was Raphael of Urbino, then a young man."

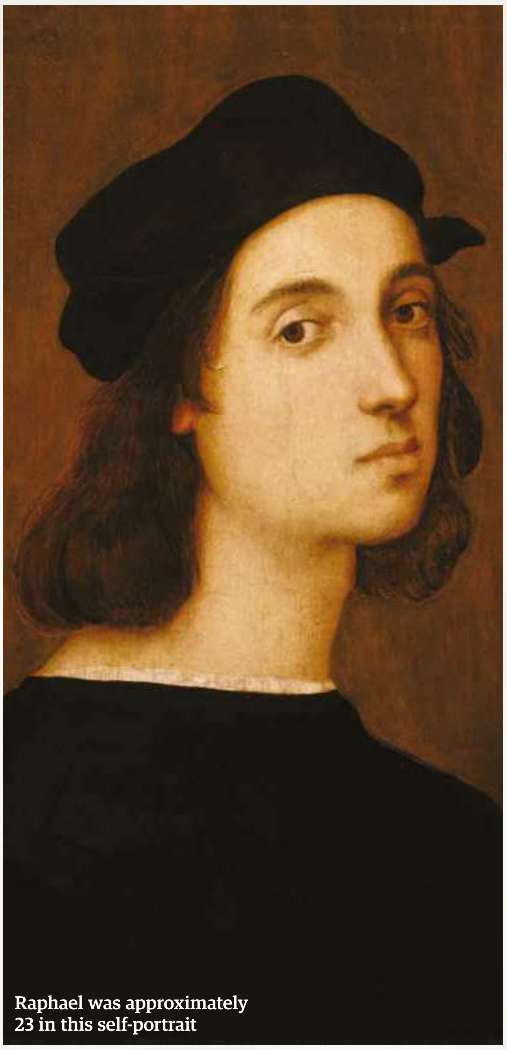
In his early twenties, the newcomer was already contributing his own ideas. What those ideas were we can see from his earliest signed work, *Crucifixion With Saints*, painted for a church in the Umbrian city of Città di Castello. Traditional depiction of religious scenes had displayed holy figures with halos, sometimes set against a gilded background to indicate the timeless, heavenly significance of the events portrayed. Later treatments of such subjects would present them as historical happenings set in the everyday world. Raphael's *Crucifixion* stands midway between the two. Set in a real landscape occupied by real people, the painting yet conveys the numinous by its radiant blue sky peopled by dancing angels.

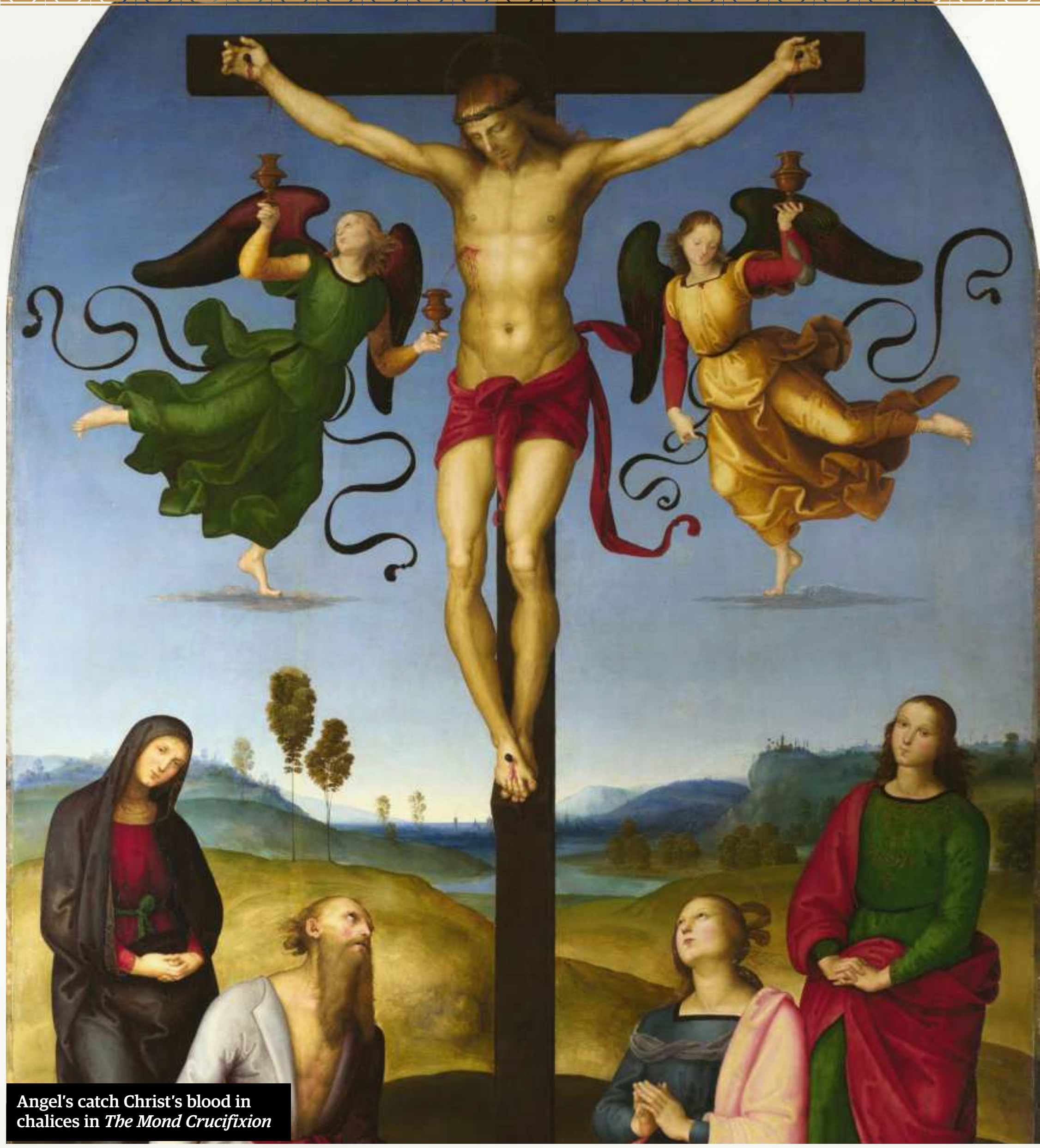
A type of painting for which demand was growing was the portrait. Patrons had sometimes paid to have their likenesses included as 'observers' or 'participants' in religious scenes, but during the Renaissance years several prominent men and women ordered artists to depict their faces in paint, either as gifts for loved ones or to capture their features for posterity. Artists, on the other hand, were fascinated by the challenge presented by the human face. They made portraits to celebrate the ideal of beauty or in response to the challenge to capture the 'mind behind the face'. With the exception of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, no-one in Florence was better at female portraiture than Raphael. The subject of his *Lady With A Unicorn* might have been a member of the ducal court at Urbino, for the unicorn was an emblem of the ruling family. It could equally well be a tribute to virginity because that was also symbolised by the unicorn. What is beyond question is that Raphael has captured the look, half-uncertain, half-defiant of a beautiful girl on the verge of womanhood.

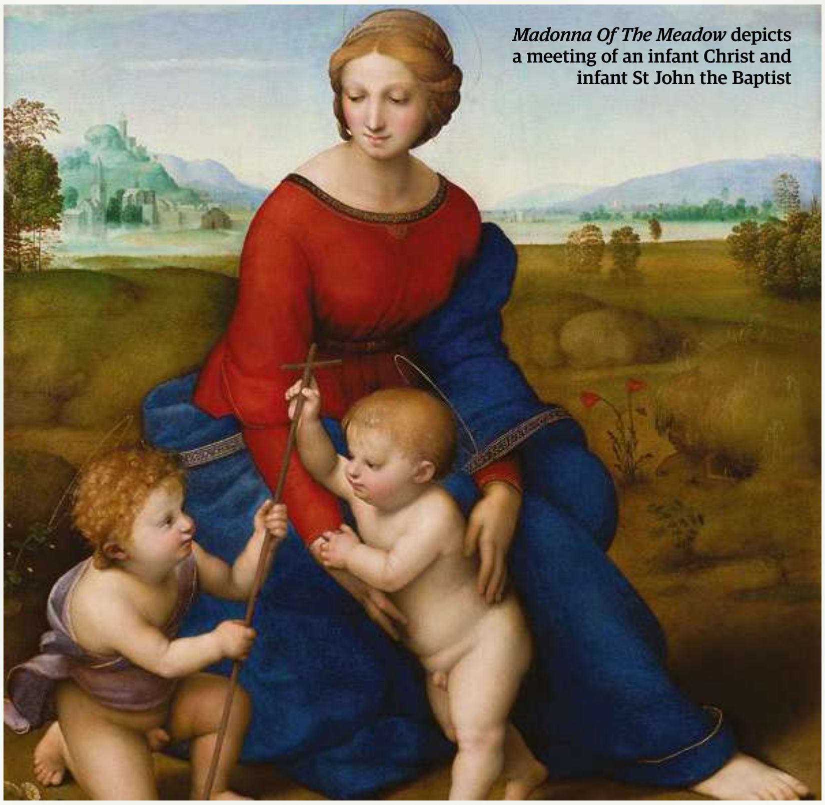
Raphael's portrait of Pope Julius II (painted in 1511-12) could hardly be more different, though equally telling. Julius (Giuliano della Rovere) was one of the most dynamic occupants of the papal chair. Elected in 1503, he was known as the 'warrior pope' and 'il pontefice terribile'. In ten brief years he cleaned the Augean Stables of Vatican corruption, led his own troops in battle to put an end to French interference as well as beginning the radical rebuilding of Rome. But Raphael's portrait is not that of a powerful force for change. It was painted in the last year of Julius's life when his grandiose schemes had bankrupted the papal treasury. Raphael shows us a tired old man racked by gout

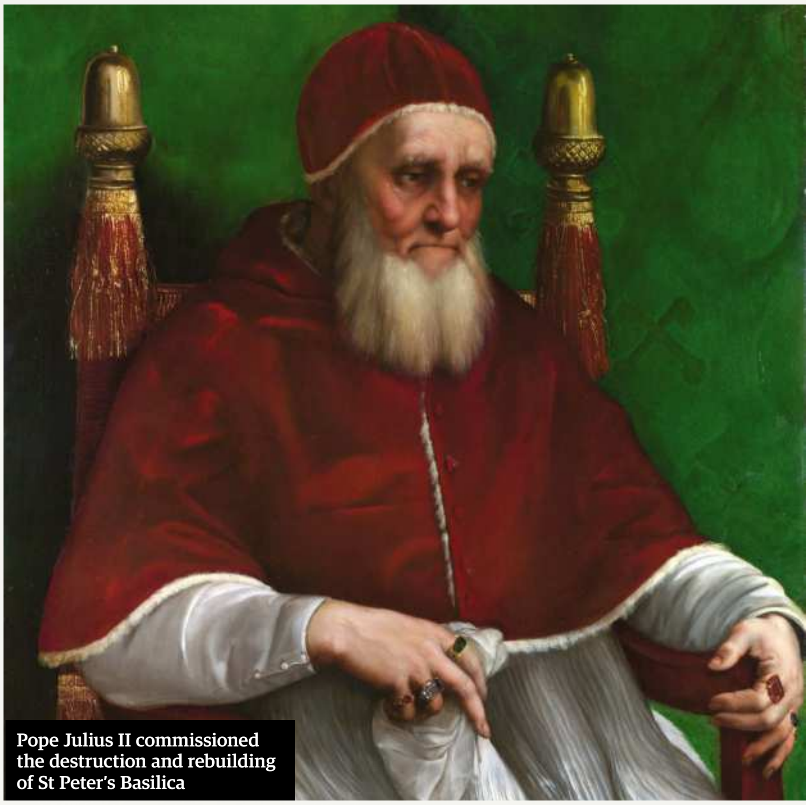


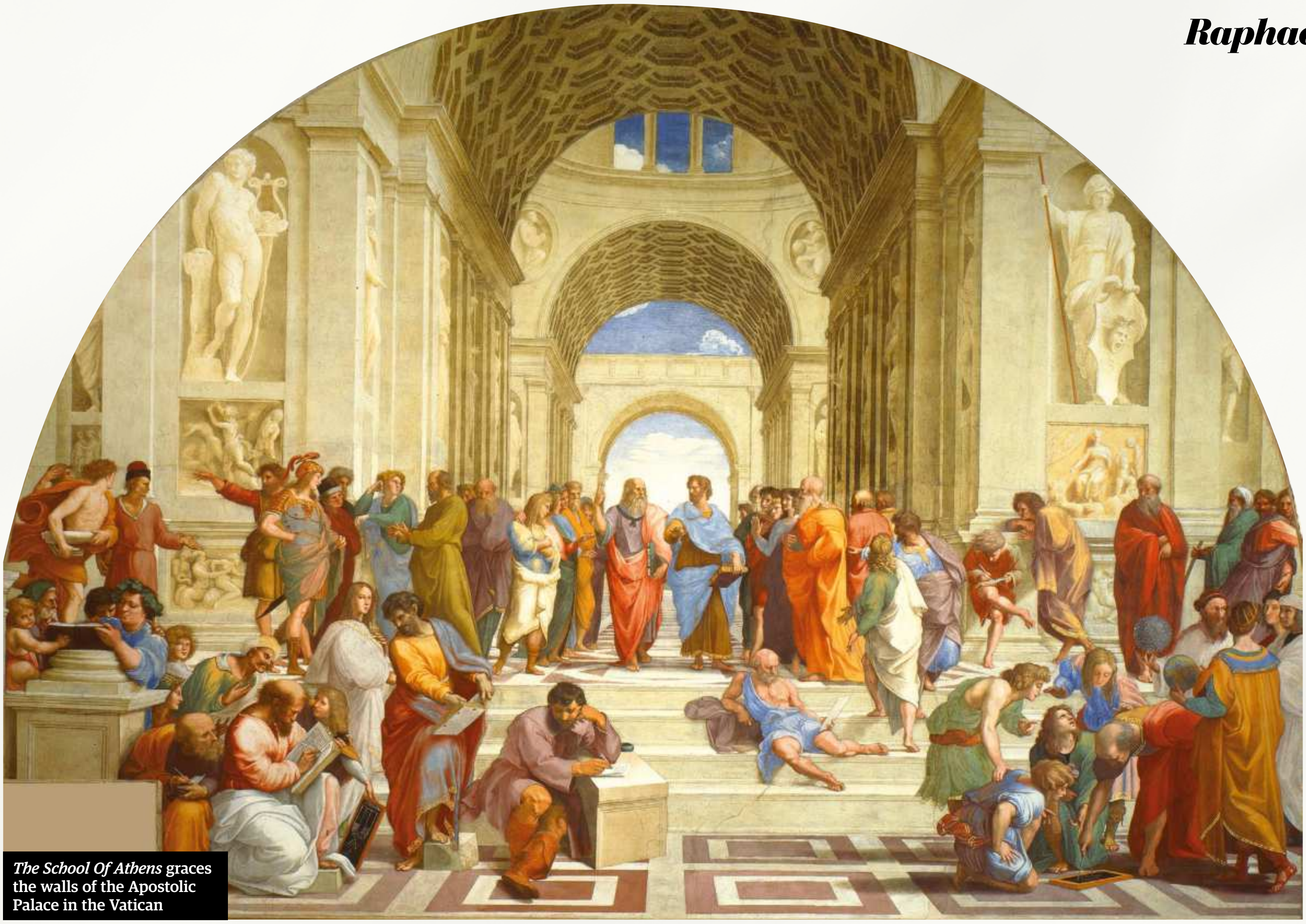
Raphael is depicted here with La Fornarina, his first love, in a painting by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres c.1814


Raphael was approximately 23 in this self-portrait


Angel's catch Christ's blood in chalices in *The Mond Crucifixion*


Madonna Of The Meadow depicts a meeting of an infant Christ and infant St John the Baptist


Pope Julius II commissioned the destruction and rebuilding of St Peter's Basilica



The School Of Athens **graces the walls of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican**

and syphilis and contemplating the ruin of all he had laboured for.

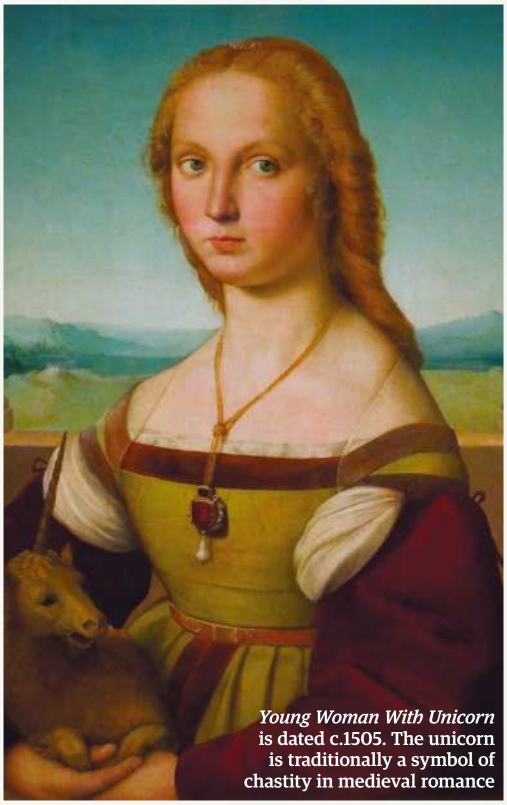
Few people knew the pope better. Raphael had almost daily audiences with his patron who took a close – almost obsessive – interest in the ongoing work. While the secretive Michelangelo was working at the ceiling decoration of the Sistine Chapel behind locked doors, Raphael was transforming the suite of rooms where the pope received guests and conducted business. One story tells how Donato Bramante, the papal architect, let Raphael in for a peep at the amazing work the older artist was doing and what he saw inspired Raphael's own labours. The most breathtaking of the frescoes are the two large panels facing each other in the Stanza della Segnatura. They swarm with figures that encapsulate much of what the Renaissance was about, the quest for truth through both divine revelation and philosophical enquiry. In *The Disputation Over The Sacrament*, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, flanked by Old Testament prophets and New Testament saints, bestows the sacrament of the mass, while on a lower level theologians agitatedly discuss the meaning of this miracle. Opposite this fresco stands what has, since the 18th century, been known as *The School Of Athens*. Within a vaulted space flanked by Doric pillars Raphael presents a galaxy of the great thinkers of antiquity – Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Euclid and others. The faces the artist gives these intellectual heroes are those of some of Raphael's contemporaries and, on the extreme right, he has included himself. These two great frescoes indicate clearly what the Renaissance was about – a bringing together of the great traditions represented by Greco-Roman intellectual enquiry and the divine revelation vouchsafed to the Christian Church.

Impressive though such complex compositions are, it is his more intimate portrayal of the Madonna and child that have especially endeared him to people over the centuries. Raphael returned to this subject over and again, executing orders for clients who wanted images for church décor or personal devotion. No less than 17 versions have survived, all employing the triangular composition the artist had made very much his own.

Raphael was still working on the Vatican projects when Julius II died in 1513. The new pope, the extravagant and fun-loving Leo X, employed the artist on yet more ambitious projects, such as designing a set of tapestries describing the lives of St Peter and St Paul. Raphael was now extremely wealthy and living in his own palazzo opposite the basilica that slowly took shape.

Vasari described him in his later years walking the streets of Rome surrounded by an entourage of apprentices and doting admirers. But in 1520 this artistic celebrity fell sick with a fever and, on his 37th birthday on 6 April 1520, he died.

This most endearing and approachable of Renaissance artists remained popular over succeeding centuries as the one above all others who represented classicism with a human face. In 1833 his tomb was opened for devotees to gaze on his remains. So strong was his influence that progressive artists in the mid-19th century felt the need to break away from it. They called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.



Young Woman With Unicorn **is dated c.1505. The unicorn is traditionally a symbol of chastity in medieval romance**

COSIMO I: MEDICI GRAND DUKE

Born in obscurity, Cosimo secured the Medici inheritance through luck. Thanks to his strong rule, he established himself as grand duke of Tuscany

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

Cosimo I rose from obscurity to become one of the Medici's greatest rulers. His mother was the granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent, while his father - a famous mercenary - descended from a junior branch of the Medici family. Cosimo was born into wealth, but was very far removed from the main Medici line. This all changed with the murder of Alessandro, duke of Florence, in 1537, when Cosimo was 17 years old.

Alessandro's murder shocked the family and threw its succession into turmoil. At the time, the only male claimant in the senior line was just four years old, with his claims attracting little support. Instead, when the succession was debated shortly after the murder, Cosimo was almost unanimously chosen. The new duke of Florence was sent for immediately from his home in Mugello.

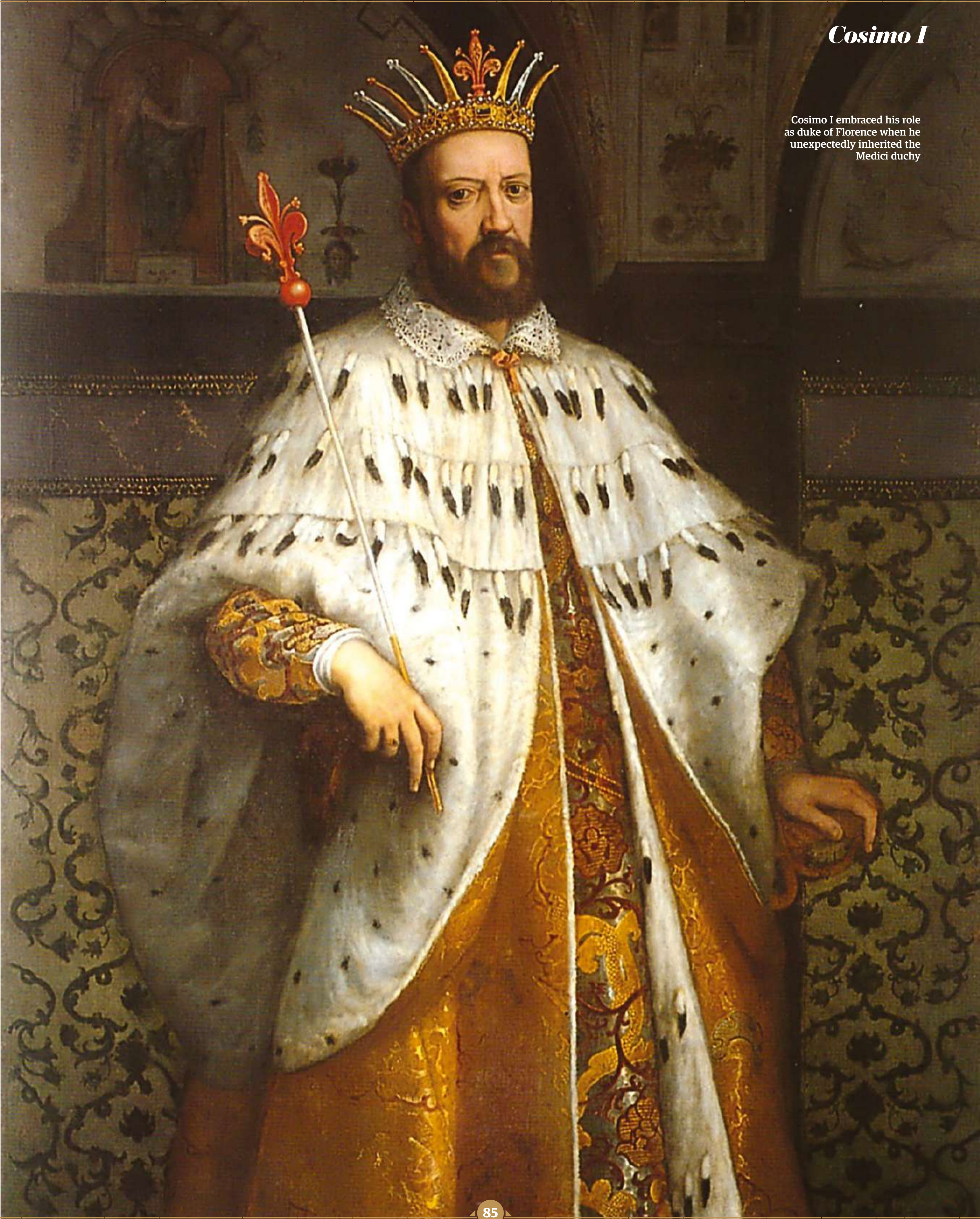
To those at the ducal court, Cosimo was an unknown quantity, chosen only for his Medici ancestry. First sight must have seemed promising. He was athletic in build, as his father had been, and well educated. The young duke was also serious and quiet, with his reserved nature later leading to accusations of secretiveness. In later life his attendants would complain they rarely knew what he planned to do or where he planned to be. He was also moody and unpredictable. A Venetian envoy recorded that his changeable nature - moving rapidly from geniality to severity - meant that it was said of him in Florence "he doffs and dons the Duke whenever he pleases".

These character traits were not immediately apparent when Cosimo first arrived in Florence. It was hoped by those about him, including Francesco Guicciardini, Duke Alessandro's leading advisor, that the new duke would leave the rule of Florence to them. However, it quickly became clear that Cosimo intended to be his own man.

While his accession was supported by some of the city's ruling class, not everyone was as eager to welcome the new duke. It was necessary for Cosimo to immediately take up arms to secure his inheritance once he had arrived in his city. In July 1537 the new duke, with the help of Spanish troops, routed the forces of the Fuorusciti, who were Florentine exiles intent on his downfall. Among the opposing forces were men from some of the leading families of Florence, with the victorious Cosimo parading his captives through the city before executing their leaders. He dealt ruthlessly with those who opposed him, demonstrating that he was a man who would not be easily led.

Cosimo had arrived in a city that was almost bankrupt and riven with factions and conspiracy. By 1537, Italy had, for some years, been the focus of the rivalry between the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who also ruled Spain, and Francis I of France. Although he maintained good relations with the emperor, who considered Florence to be an imperial fief, Cosimo was determined to secure his duchy's independence. In 1543, with a growing threat to the Holy Roman Empire from the Turks, Cosimo negotiated to pay the impoverished emperor 200,000 florins for the return of the fortresses at Pisa and Livorno and the withdrawal of imperial troops from Florence. He continued to have close diplomatic links to the imperial royal family for the remainder of his life, while also providing support for his cousin, Catherine de' Medici, who was regent of France after the death of her husband, King Henry II.

As one of the last male members of the Medici family, Cosimo was acutely aware of the need to



Cosimo I embraced his role as duke of Florence when he unexpectedly inherited the Medici duchy secure the dynasty's future. While he brought his illegitimate daughter, Bia, with him to Florence to be raised by his mother, he also needed legitimate heirs. After first attempting to marry Duke Alessandro's widow, Margaret of Austria, he settled for marriage with the well-connected Eleanor of Toledo. It was to be a very fruitful union, with the new duchess producing 11 children during the couple's 23 years of marriage. Cosimo took great pleasure in his growing family, eating quietly with them whenever he was at home. In private, he ate plainly and was noted to smile only rarely. His favourite pursuit was hunting, something he engaged in passionately.

While Cosimo liked to live relatively simply behind the walls of his palaces, he carefully cultivated a magnificent public image. Like many of his Medici forebears, he was a great patron of the arts, determined to ensure that his city reflected the glory of his dynasty. He helped found the scholarly Academia Fiorentina in 1542, for example, while he also spent lavishly on building projects, such as the vast Uffizi Palace that was intended to serve as administrative offices.

He also proved to be a generous benefactor to the Church, paying not only for a new choir for the Duomo but also a tomb for his father in the old Medici church of San Lorenzo. Cosimo's works meant that he and his family lived in luxurious surroundings, with his social status clear to everyone. In 1545, he invested in opening two of his own tapestry workshops to ensure that his walls were adorned with the finest and most expensive hangings. Additionally, he commissioned exquisite works of art; this included decorating his private apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio with pictures of his Medici forebears.

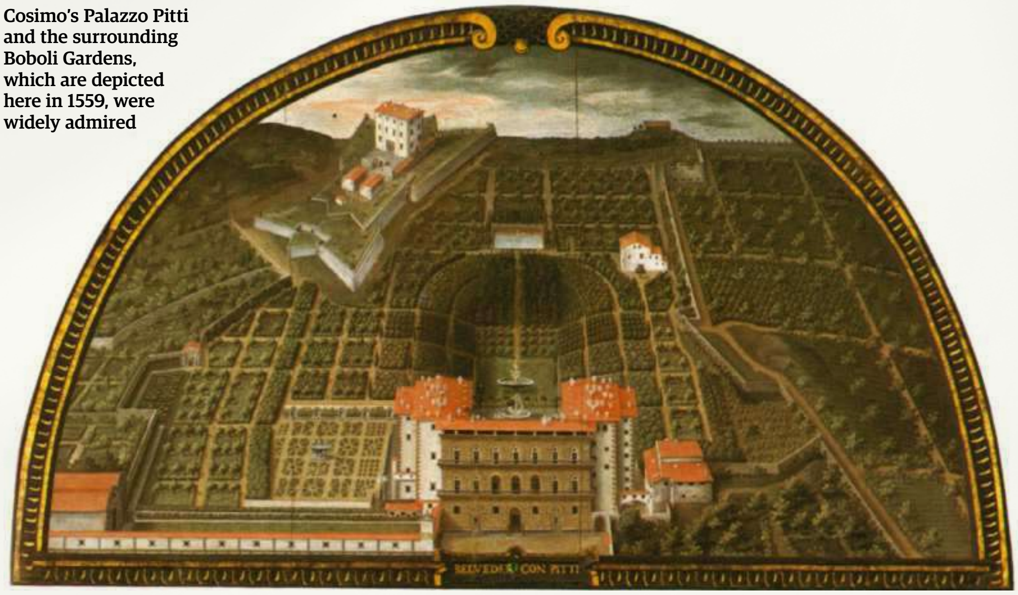
He spent particularly lavishly on his own residences, including the Palazzo Pitti, which stood outside the city on the south bank of the River Arno. Cosimo - who guarded his privacy and was anxious about the threat of assassination - had a covered walkway, known as the Vasari Corridor, constructed. This ran all the way from the Palazzo Vecchio, his residence in the city, through the Uffizi, over the bridge Ponte Vecchio and on to the Palazzo Pitti.

Cosimo's fears for his own personal safety were understandable, given his predecessor's murder and the troubled city that he inherited. Determined to keep himself safe, he set up a network of spies in Florence to report on any murmurings of discontent. He also banned his subjects from carrying weapons in the city. Cosimo was, in any event, rather more popular than the autocratic Duke Alessandro and permitted people to approach him as he rode through the city.

Cosimo was also extremely hard working, being reputed to rise from his bed two or three hours before it was light in the morning. He reorganised the state bureaucracy, as well as spending huge sums on the city's defences. As his reign progressed, his military might was increasingly recognised, with Cosimo's navy having major importance in the Holy Roman Empire's wars against the Turks. The navy was a particular focus of his ambition, with Cosimo once remarking that "a man is not powerful, unless he is as powerful by sea as he is by land".

Not all of Cosimo's military endeavours were focused on defence and he was determined to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. Between 1554 and 1557, he fought a bloody war with neighbouring Siena during which the population

“He was crowned in Rome in the Sistine Chapel by the pope”



Cosimo's Palazzo Pitti and the surrounding Boboli Gardens, which are depicted here in 1559, were widely admired

COSIMO'S OFFICE BLOCK

Cosimo I is today credited with building one of the world's first office blocks - the famous Uffizi

Cosimo's Uffizi Palace, which was built to serve as administrative offices, now houses one of the world's finest art collections.

Cosimo I was determined to ensure the stability of his dynasty by centralising Florence's administration. As such, he employed an increasing number of officials and bureaucrats, all of whom needed somewhere to work.

For Cosimo, the solution was to build a new palace, close to his own ducal residence. With work beginning in 1560, the Medici duke spared no expense, lavishing 400,000 florins on his building project. It was intended that the building would initially house Florence's magistrates, as well as other officials. Due to this, it was named the Uffizi, which translates as 'offices' and can be considered one of the world's first office blocks.

Although the Uffizi was not intended as a ducal residence, Cosimo ensured that it was an imposing building and that it was clear exactly who had built it. Outside the building a life-size statue of Cosimo, flanked by allegorical figures representing severe and just government, let it be known to the world how he intended to rule. The vast building was finally finished in 1581.

The Uffizi is now famous as a gallery, housing one of the world's most important art collections. As early as 1581, under the rule of Cosimo's son, Francesco I, the Uffizi was used to display the family's vast art collection, with Francesco converting a corridor above the magistrates' offices into a gallery for his statues, while his paintings and other valuable curiosities were stored in the octagonal Tribuna room. Many of these priceless works of arts remain in the building today.

© imageBROKER / Alamy Stock Photo

The Palazzo Pitti, which was purchased by Eleanor of Toledo in 1549. Cosimo spent vast sums on its renovation.

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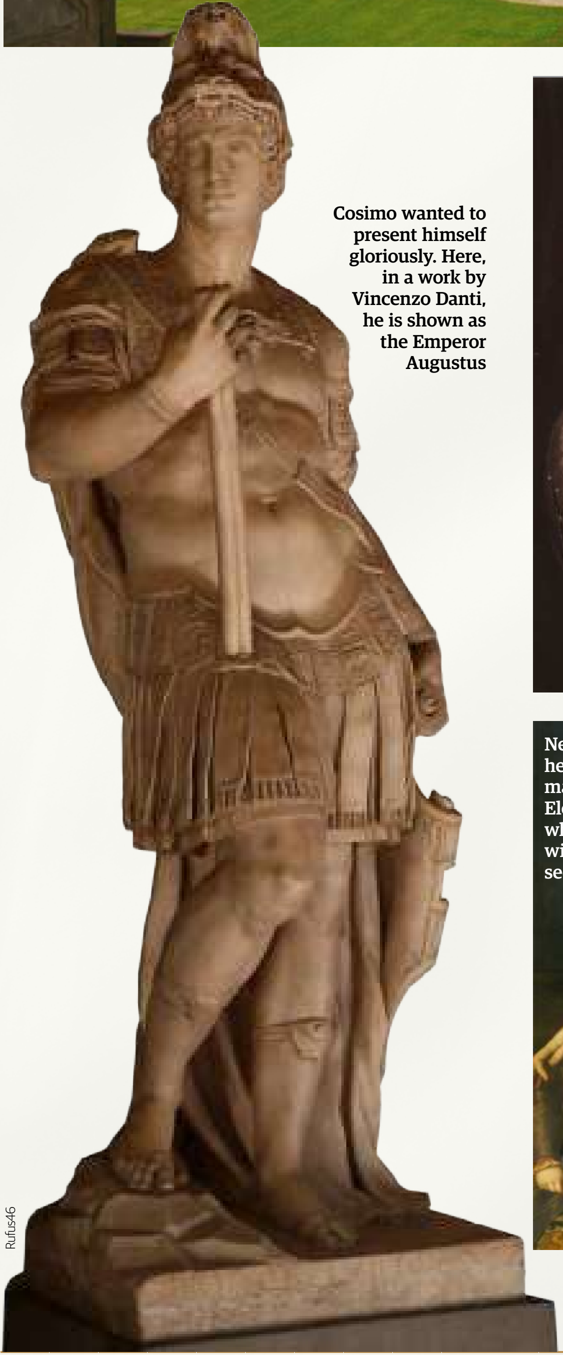
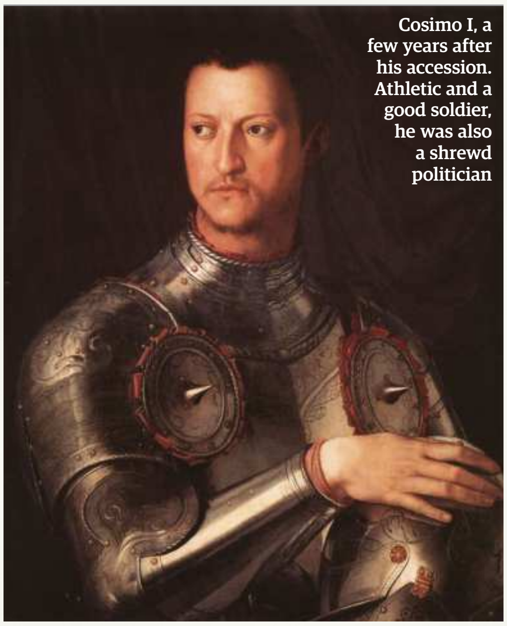
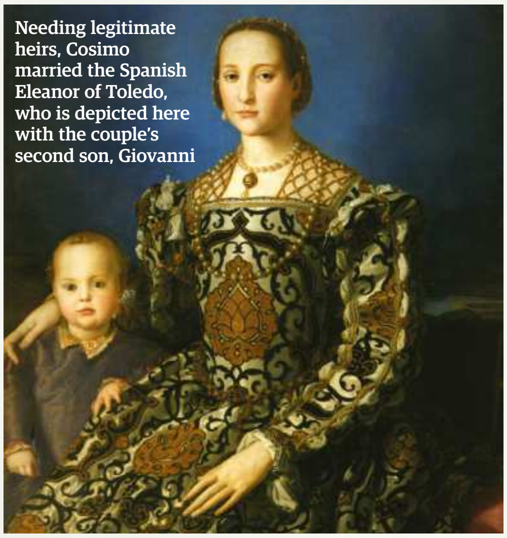


Cosimo wanted to present himself gloriously. Here, in a work by Vincenzo Danti, he is shown as the Emperor Augustus

Rufus46



Cosimo I, a few years after his accession. Athletic and a good soldier, he was also a shrewd politician



Needing legitimate heirs, Cosimo married the Spanish Eleanor of Toledo, who is depicted here with the couple's second son, Giovanni

of the rival city was reduced from 14,000 to 6,000. He was triumphant and took control of the city, which he held as a Spanish fief, but the huge cost involved did not go uncriticised in Florence. The ravaged city and its territories added little value to the ducal coffers. For Cosimo personally, however, the acquisition of Siena was vital, as he sought to build a state, centred on Florence.

Although Cosimo's rule grew increasingly successful and his city prosperous, he was increasingly troubled by grief as he aged. Several of his children died young, to his deep distress, while his wife, Eleanor, died in his arms in 1562 after a long illness. Cosimo increasingly withdrew from the rule of his duchy and delegated his affairs to his eldest son from 1564. He also took mistresses, marrying one, Camilla Martelli, who had borne him a daughter.

Although Cosimo lived increasingly quietly after 1564, he had still not fulfilled his life's ambition of becoming a prince and establishing a state. He finally achieved this in 1569 when he was granted the title of grand duke of Tuscany, making him the premier duke in Italy and a lord on a par with many of his Northern European rivals. Delighted, Cosimo ordered a service of thanksgiving in Florence's Duomo that December, while a royal crown was added to his coat of arms. On 5 March 1570, he was crowned in Rome in the Sistine Chapel by the pope himself. It was the culmination of all his ambitions.

By the time of his coronation, Cosimo was already suffering from significant ill health, with the grand duke often carried in a litter due to gout. He suffered several strokes in his later years, which left him disabled. Cosimo I, grand duke of Tuscany, who had restored an impoverished Florence and turned his inheritance into the premier duchy in Italy, died on 21 April 1574. He was only 55 years old and left his grand duchy to his son, Francesco.

PALACES, PATRONS AND PRINCES

The Medici's love of the arts and total dominance of Florence is seen in the magnificent palazzi, chapels and villas that they built during their dramatic time at the top

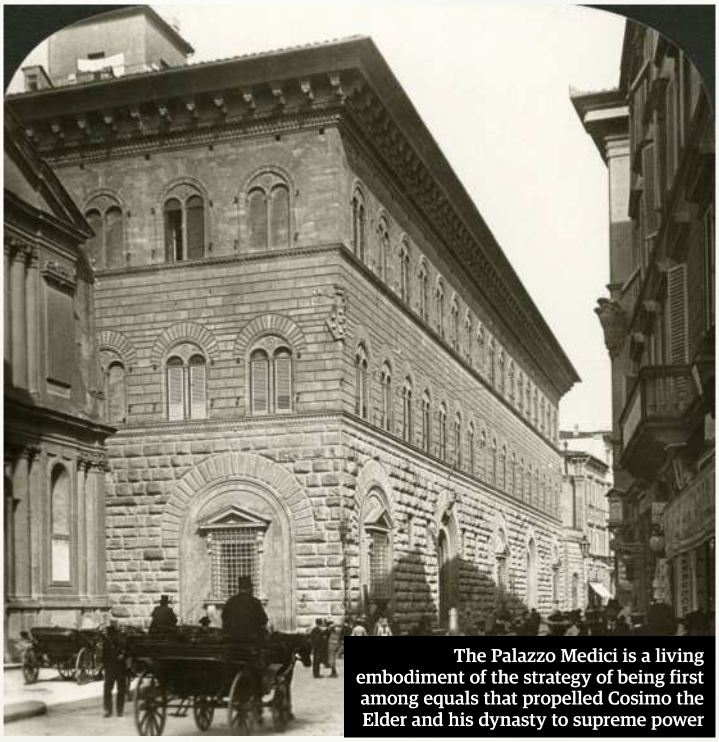
Words **June Woolerton**

From their early home in the Mugello to the gilded splendour of their Grand Ducal palaces, the buildings associated with the Medici were always testament to their patronage of the arts.

As the family built its power and wealth, its most famous members used architecture as a way of demonstrating their status while enriching the cultural life of the areas they came to rule. Building and decorating dynastic homes or glorifying religion through work on churches and chapels also gave the Medici an opportunity to extend patronage to innovative designers. Their support for architects, artists and artisans showcased new ideas and became a vivid example of the Renaissance at its very finest.

In their later years, the Medici commissioned buildings befitting their princely status. The great palazzi of the 16th century would end up more striking than the power actually wielded by the grand dukes who inhabited them, but their dominance of Florence - the city the Medici had made their own - was just as complete.

The dynasty dominated the city and its surrounding area with their palaces, villas and churches. The buildings, with their varying styles and priceless artworks, are a visual reminder of the power of the Medici.



The Palazzo Medici is a living embodiment of the strategy of being first among equals that propelled Cosimo the Elder and his dynasty to supreme power

PALAZZO MEDICI

1445

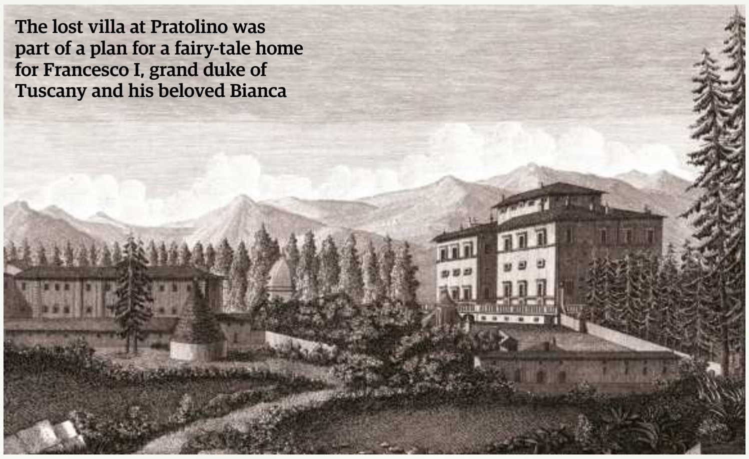
The Palazzo Medici, built on the orders of Cosimo the Elder, was a stone representation of all the dynasty stood for. Grander than the homes of other wealthy families but not dramatically so, it occupied the heart of Florence almost by stealth.

The palazzo began in typical Medici style. When Cosimo decided his dynasty needed a bigger residence, he bought properties neighbouring their Casa Vecchia then promptly had them all demolished so that his architect, Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi, could start afresh.

The result was a Renaissance palace with rusticated floors that would influence architecture in Florence for years. Stretching along the Via Larga, it dominated this central part of the city and was covered in the famous symbol of the Medici, the palle, which stared out at Florentines from every corner of the new palazzo.

The interior of the residence was just as celebrated. As well as a frescoed courtyard and elaborate garden, the Palazzo Medici was home to the Magi Chapel, which was decorated with another statement of the dynasty's power. Benozzo Gozzoli created a fresco showing the Journey of the Magi through Tuscany, with many of the Medici family painted as characters in the scene.

In 1517, the building was partially redesigned by Michelangelo, who created the kneeling windows that dominate a section of the lower floor. After Cosimo I moved the family's main home to Palazzo Vecchio in 1540, Palazzo Medici was used by distant relatives until it was sold to the Riccardi family in 1659.



The lost villa at Pratolino was part of a plan for a fairy-tale home for Francesco I, grand duke of Tuscany and his beloved Bianca

VILLA DI PRATOLINO

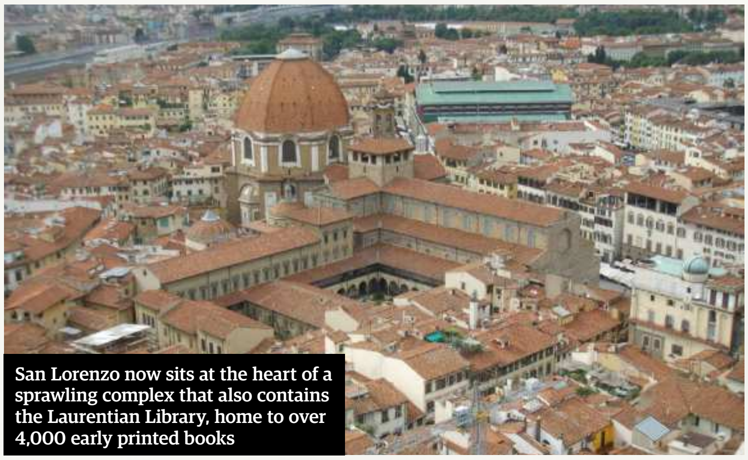
1569–1581

A romantic gesture that turned into a romantic ruin, the villa at Pratolino was built to impress a mistress who became a consort.

Francesco I de' Medici was so smitten with his lover, the beautiful Bianca Capello, that he commissioned Bernardo Buontalenti to design a villa for her at his newly acquired lands in Vaglia, about ten miles north of Florence. The result was a home described by contemporaries as a rival to the Villa d'Este in Rome.

Like many Medici residences, it was more famed for its gardens and extensive parks. They housed celebrated sculptures including the Appennine Colossus by one of Francesco's favourite artists, Giambologna. Francesco also commissioned a series of fountains for the gardens, while his love nest contained man-made grottoes as well as a finely landscaped formal garden filled with ornate flowers.

When Francesco finally married Bianca, their public wedding celebrations took place at Pratolino but following their deaths, the villa fell into disrepair. Later Medicis took some of the garden's sculptures to decorate their other properties. By the 18th century, the Villa di Pratolino had become a celebrated ruin.



San Lorenzo now sits at the heart of a sprawling complex that also contains the Laurentian Library, home to over 4,000 early printed books

SAN LORENZO CHURCH

1419

There has been a church on the site of San Lorenzo since 393 AD but the founder of the Medici's fortune, Giovanni di Bicci, paid for renovation work that started in 1418 with Brunelleschi in charge of the whole project.

His interior is built around cool, grey stone columns rising to smooth arches and capped with a coffered ceiling. However, it is fronted by a plain façade. The outward image of San Lorenzo belies the competitions that went on to design a façade. Raphael was among those who offered ideas, with Michelangelo later winning a commission. However, the plans made by Michelangelo never came to fruition.

San Lorenzo is home to works by some of the most famous Renaissance artists. Donatello created two fonts in bronze, his last pieces, and also helped decorate the Old Sacristy, which was designed by Brunelleschi. Antonio Manetti was responsible for the cloister and crypt while the Martelli Chapel contains Filippo Lippi's famous painting of the Annunciation.

It was the Medici family church for centuries and Cosimo the Elder, who turned them into Florence's first family, is buried in front of the High Altar.

PALAZZO PITTI

1458

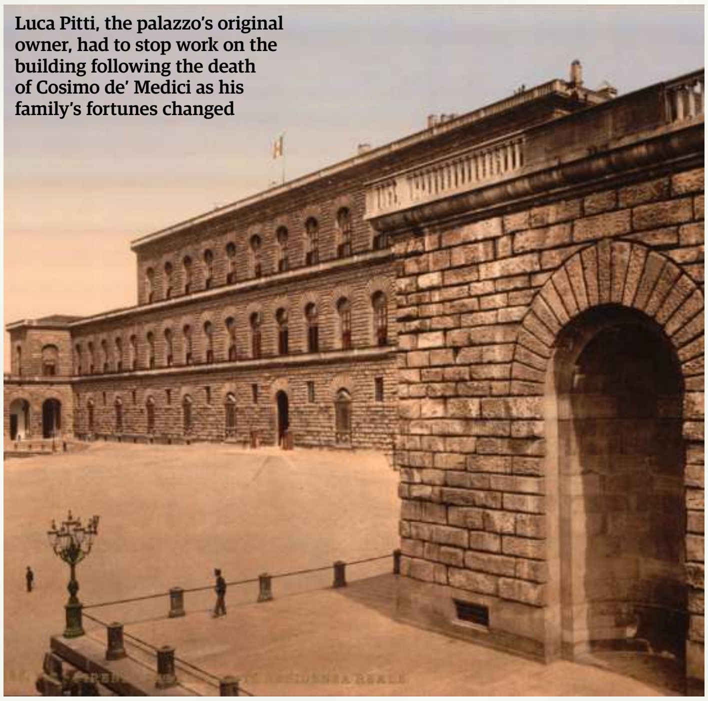
The palazzo that would come to symbolise late Medici rule was built by a close ally of the early dynasty in an apparent attempt to outdo them. Luca Pitti, friend of Cosimo de' Medici, used Brunelleschi and his pupil Luca Fancelli to construct his impressive home, requesting larger windows than those owned by the Medici. Less than a century later his descendants had sold it.

The new owner was Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo I. She and her husband brought in Giorgio Vasari to turn the palazzo into a ducal court. The building was almost doubled in size, while Vasari added an overhead walkway between the Pitti and the couple's official residence at the Palazzo Vecchio.

Cosimo brought in another favourite, Niccolo Tribolo, to landscape the gardens but he died a year later and was replaced by Bartolomeo Ammanati. Their collective work, the Boboli Gardens, became renowned throughout Europe and included a courtyard to link the grounds to the palazzo.

Francesco I made the Palazzo Pitti into the main Medici residence and filled it with many of the works of art belonging to the family. In the later years of the dynasty, the grand duke usually occupied one wing of the palazzo while his heir was given use of another.

Following the end of Medici rule, the palace ended up in the hands of Napoleon who used it as a powerbase. The kings of the newly unified Italy also resided at the Palazzo Pitti until Victor Emmanuel III donated the building and many of its art works to the Italian people in 1919.


Luca Pitti, the palazzo's original owner, had to stop work on the building following the death of Cosimo de' Medici as his family's fortunes changed

The grounds of the villa, in the hills of Florence, were planted with flowers and fruit by its first Medici residents

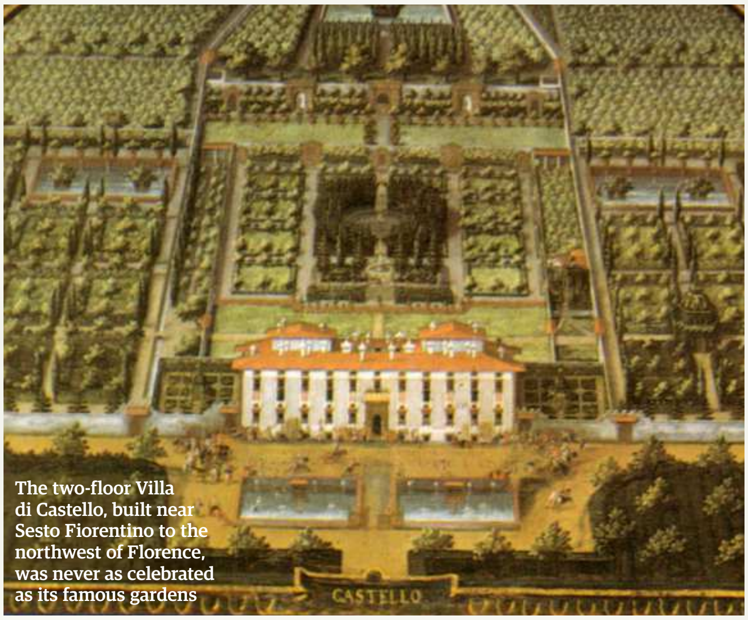
VILLA DI CAREGGI

1417

There was already a villa at Careggi when the Medici bought the site in 1417 while Giovanni di Bicci was still head of the family. His elder son, Cosimo, had the building redesigned by his favourite architect, Michelozzo, who successfully turned the loggia-enclosed courtyard into an exquisite residence befitting his client's growing status.

Cosimo regularly tended its walled garden and turned it into a cultural centre when he founded his Platonic Academy here. He would spend his last summer at Careggi, dying at the villa on 1 August 1464.

His grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, also fell under the spell of Careggi's gardens and had them extended. He, too, died at Careggi in 1492 after which it was neglected until the time of Cardinal Carlo de' Medici, who remodelled the villa and its gardens during the mid-17th century. It was sold by the Medici in 1779.



The two-floor Villa di Castello, built near Sesto Fiorentino to the northwest of Florence, was never as celebrated as its famous gardens

VILLA DI CASTELLO

1427

Bought by the Medici in 1477, the Villa di Castello became central to Cosimo I's image after he became grand duke of Tuscany in 1537. The Medici had already added loggias and kitchens to the building and made it home to two of Botticelli's most famous works, including *Primavera*, but Cosimo commissioned architect Giorgio Vasari to turn it into a glittering example of Medici might.

Niccolo Tribolo was also employed, expected to turn the gardens into masterpieces. Set over three terraces, they became home to many famous sculptures, including a fountain showing the story of Hercules and Anteus. There were also statues glorifying Ancient Rome, part of Cosimo's grand plan to show his rule as a new era of success.

The gardens were copied across Europe and expanded by later Medici including Cosimo III, who built greenhouses at the villa. It passed out of Medici hands in 1737.

The villa was built around a courtyard while the gardens were designed in true Renaissance style

VILLA DI CAFAGGIOLO

14th century

The original powerbase of the dynasty, this villa in Barberino di Mugello was first owned by Averardo de' Medici, father of the family's fortune maker, Giovanni di Bicci. Situated in the Sieve Valley, about 25 kilometres outside Florence, it was regularly used by the Medici, with Cosimo the Elder commissioning Michelozzo to remodel it into a country retreat in 1452.

The family also used it as a refuge, fleeing there when plague broke out in Florence or when their security was threatened by rivals. It was a favourite home of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who held famous entertainments at the villa, attracting some of the leading cultural figures of the day. It was a childhood home to the future Pope Leo X (born Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici) and the place where brides, including Margherita of Austria, were received as they arrived for dynastic marriages. In 1576, Pietro de' Medici murdered his wife Eleonora at Cafaggiolo after learning of her adultery.

The villa remained in Medici hands until the dynasty came to an end with the death of Gian Gastone in 1737.

THE MEDICI CHAPELS

1520 onwards

Pope Clement VII, born Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, came up with the idea of a magnificent family vault where his dynasty could be buried with all the honours he felt due to them. It was to become part of the San Lorenzo complex.

In 1520, Michelangelo began work on the project with his New Sacristy taking shape by 1524 but he never finished all the statues planned for grand tombs inside. In the early 17th century, Cosimo I's plans for a ducal burial vault were revived by Francesco I and in 1604, Matteo Nigetti began work on the Prince's Chapel. The plans were overseen by Cosimo's illegitimate son, Giovanni, who had some training in architecture himself. Built in the Baroque style, it was elaborately decorated with marble and semi precious stones. The grand ducal tombs were topped with bronze statues.

The Chapel of the Princes is the last resting place of six of the Medici grand dukes of Tuscany

In 1922, George V's daughter, Princess Mary, honeymooned at Fiesole with her new husband, Viscount Lascelles

© wiki; Donata Mazzini

VILLA DI FIESOLE

1458-1461

Cosimo de' Medici bought the site of the villa at Fiesole, to the northeast of the city, for his son, Giovanni, and by 1458 Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi was transforming the modest home already on the site for the family.

The property, with its endless views and romantic air, ended up in the hands of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who bought more of the surrounding land so that the villa and its gardens could be expanded. He turned it into a cultural hub, attracting leading thinkers like Poliziano, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola there.

The villa is built in the typical style of a 15th-century palazzo with extensive loggias. It remained in Medici hands until 1671 when it was sold. It is now famous for its terraced gardens and is one of the best preserved of all the Medici villas.

The Palazzo Vecchio's most famous room, the Salone del Cinquecento, was built on the orders of Savanarola during the Medici exile from Florence at the close of the 15th century

PALAZZO VECCHIO

1299

Turned into the glittering heart of Cosimo I's court, the Palazzo Vecchio had already played a major part in the Medici rise to power in Florence by the time the young grand duke transformed it into a home fit for a prince.

Built as a base for Florentine authorities, it became the seat of the Signoria, the governing body of Florence, which slowly came under Medici control in the time of Cosimo the Elder in the 15th century. He had been imprisoned in the building when his enemies turned on him, but by the time of the Pazzi conspiracy decades later, the building was at the centre of support for Medici rule in Florence.

Cosimo I eventually moved his official residence to the building in 1540 and brought in the celebrated Giorgio Vasari to remodel it. It acquired its current name, Palazzo Vecchio, when he moved his court again, this time to the Palazzo Pitti.

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PRINCES OF THE CHURCH

Not content just with secular wealth and power, the Medici family soon set their sights on rising through the Church

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

While some members of the Medici family were genuinely pious, many saw the Church as a route to political influence. Conspicuous displays of piety helped to increase their prestige in Florence and further afield.

The family's close relationship with the Church began with Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, who founded the Medici Bank in 1397 and was responsible for creating the Medici fortune. His banking profits rose sharply thanks to his role as papal banker.

Giovanni was also a pious man, concerned with the health of his immortal soul. He spent lavishly on the Church in Florence, with the rebuilding of the parish church of San Lorenzo largely due to his beneficence. This project was not entirely religiously motivated since it also served to demonstrate the family's growing prestige to the world and served as their mausoleum.

The early Medici were able to use the financial clout of their bank to secure a relationship with the pope. With the promise of substantial loans, Giovanni's son, Cosimo, was able to persuade Pope Eugene IV to move the Council of Ferrara to Florence in 1439. The Council, which attempted to bring about a union between the Catholic and Orthodox churches was of considerable international importance, with Cosimo and his sons attending its early days in Ferrara. It was Cosimo, too, who welcomed the pope to Florence on 27 January 1439, while he also made the official greeting to the Patriarch of Constantinople the following month. The Council was hugely financially beneficial to the Medici, with the Roman branch of their bank making double the usual profit that year. The council also dramatically increased the prestige of Florence and the Medici on an international stage.

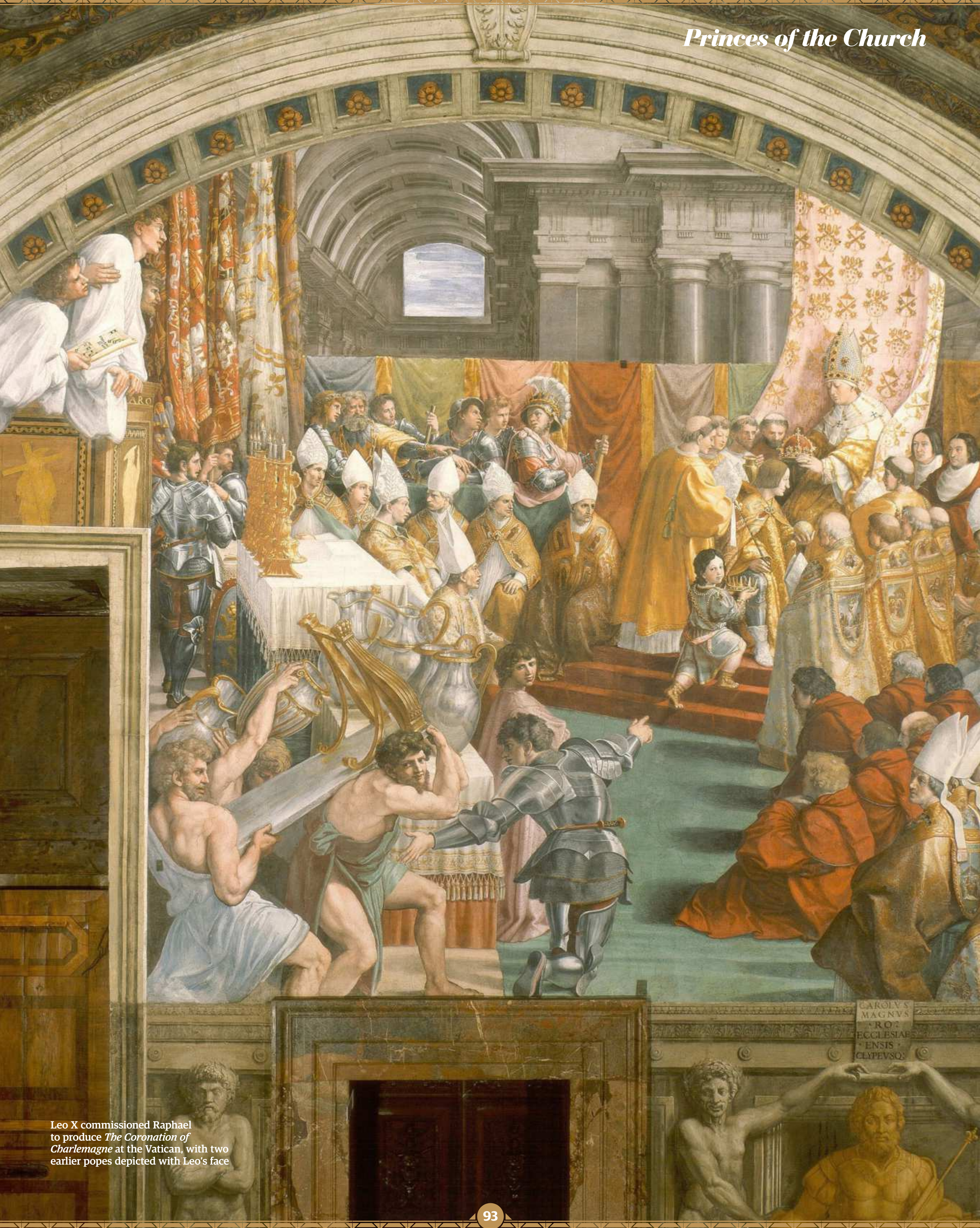
Like his father, Cosimo was a great benefactor of the Church. Ever the banker, he kept a detailed record of everything he spent on the Church in a ledger he called 'God's Account'. A particular focus of his generosity was the convent of San Marco. Cosimo built a new church there, as well as cells for the friars, a refectory and library and other buildings. Cosimo, who owned his own library of manuscripts, also donated books to the friars there, while he commissioned a gilded altarpiece for the high altar. Once again, he made sure that everyone knew who had paid for these gifts. In the altarpiece at San Marco, the Medici saints - Cosmas and Damian - were prominent. In churches dotted around the city, too, the balls of the Medici emblem began to appear with frequency.

Such lavish gifts continued into the next generation, with Cosimo's son, Piero, gifting a tabernacle (a cabinet in which the sacrament was kept) worth well over 4,000 florins to Santissima Annunziata, a church whose renovation Cosimo had also supported.

As the family's social position continued to rise and its wealth grew, it began to have ambitions within the Church. With the election of Pope Sixtus IV in 1471, the Medici Bank was again confirmed as papal banker. Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici, went himself to Rome in September 1471 to congratulate the new pontiff, with Sixtus showing his favour with lavish gifts to Lorenzo.

Lorenzo de' Medici, who was known for his extravagant lifestyle, was also keen to secure an even greater coup for the family. In November 1472, he wrote to the pope about "the long-standing desire to have a cardinal in our family", reminding Sixtus of a promise that he had made to elevate his brother, Giuliano, to cardinal. His credit with the pope was, however, damaged when, in 1473 he refused to grant the pontiff a loan of 40,000 ducats to purchase land for his nephew. The following year the Medici were removed as papal bankers, with their rivals the Pazzi appointed in their place. Later that same year, the pope appointed a Pazzi relation to the archbishopric of Pisa, another calculated slight against the Medici.

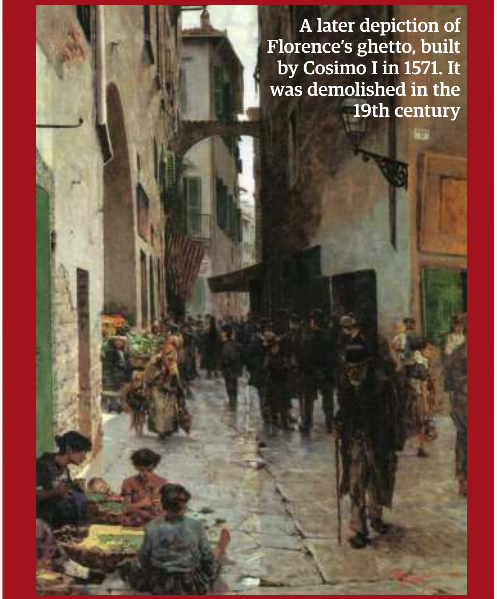
The pope also gave his tacit approval when members of the Pazzi family and some of his own


CAROLVS MAGNVS ·RO· ECCLESIAE ·ENSIS· CLYPEVSQ

Leo X commissioned Raphael to produce *The Coronation of Charlemagne* at the Vatican, with two earlier popes depicted with Leo's face

A FLORENTINE GHETTO

Cosimo I's creation of a ghetto in 1571 ensured that the Medici could profit from Florence's Jewish community



A later depiction of Florence's ghetto, built by Cosimo I in 1571. It was demolished in the 19th century

The Catholic Church did not enjoy a complete monopoly over the religion of Florence during the Medici period, with the city and surrounding Tuscany always home to a Jewish community. By 1570 there were two synagogues in Florence, with 710 Jews listed in a census of 1570 as living in the city and surrounding areas.

In 1571, Duke Cosimo I gave orders for the creation of a ghetto, in which Florence's Jews were to live. This was constructed close to the city's central market, with many of the inhabitants working as shopkeepers and merchants. For many Jews, moving to the ghetto marked a considerable drop in living conditions. It was crowded, while movement was restricted with access only through two narrow entrances, which were locked at night. This was also the first time that Florence's Jewish community had been required to live together in one area. When it was established, approximately 400 people lived within its confines.

Cosimo intended that the ghetto would be a commercial venture. The land on which the ghetto stood had previously been the city's red-light district, with the Medici buying up land and buildings there to rent to the new Jewish inhabitants. It was a profitable venture, with little attempt made by the Medici to convert the inhabitants to Christianity. It was compulsory for Jews living within the Medici duchy to live in the ghetto, something that ensured that rents on the limited property available remained very high.

nephews decided to rid Florence of the Medici. Lorenzo and his brother were at mass on the morning of 26 April 1478 when, as the Host was raised, Francesco de' Pazzi frantically stabbed Giuliano de' Medici, while two priests attacked Lorenzo. Badly wounded, Lorenzo survived the attack, but his brother was killed, leaving him to raise his sibling's illegitimate son, Giulio.

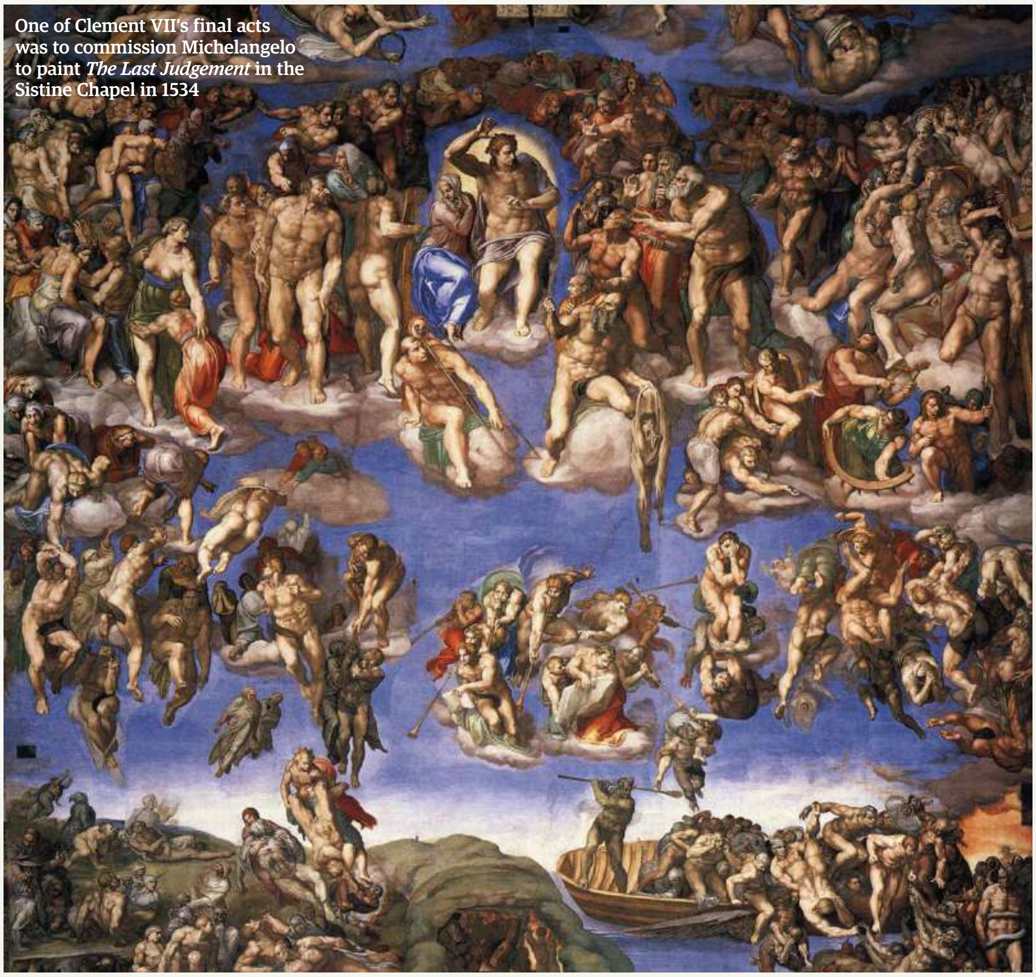
The fallout from the conspiracy was brutal, with Lorenzo hunting down and executing the leading conspirators. The execution of the priests who had stabbed him also provided the pope with an opportunity to strike, when on 1 June 1478 he issued a papal bull excommunicating Lorenzo. Soon afterwards, the pope pronounced an interdict on the city, with this only lifted in December 1480. Better news for Lorenzo followed in August 1484, when Sixtus IV died.

The new pope, Innocent VIII, was considerably more favourable. In February 1487, Lorenzo announced the betrothal of his daughter to the pope's son, paying his daughter a dowry of 4,000 florins for the privilege. On 9 March 1489, the Medici finally acquired their first Cardinal when Lorenzo's 13-year-old second son, Giovanni, was granted a red hat. As a prince of the Church, Giovanni was the highest-ranking Medici there had ever been. He would eventually rise even higher, becoming Pope Leo X in 1513. His cousin Giulio, who was the son of the murdered Giuliano de' Medici would also ascend to the papacy in 1523 as Clement VII.

The creation of a Medici cardinal finally gave the family a direct role in Vatican politics, while the future Leo X was also instrumental in ensuring the return of the Medici to Florence following their exile in 1494. Using his influence with Pope Julius II, the cardinal's brother Giuliano was able to enter Florence on 1 September 1512. With the Medici cardinal himself arriving in the city with troops shortly afterwards, the government of Florence was once again placed in the hands of the Medici. When Leo X became pope the following year, the Medici and Florence reaped the rewards.

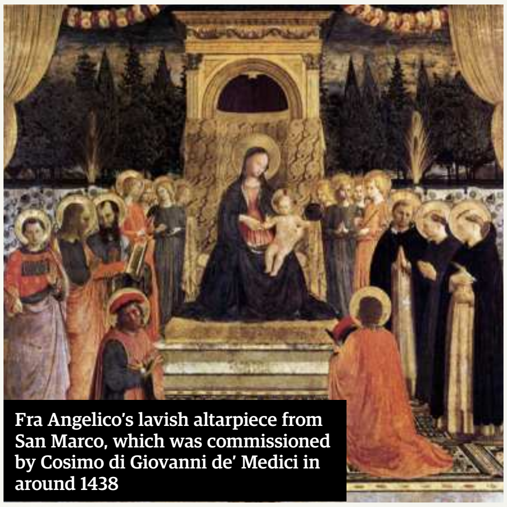
Having returned to Florence, the Medici once again began to spend lavishly on the Church. In June 1519 Giulio de' Medici, who had become a cardinal in 1513, announced that he would spend 50,000 florins further renovating San Lorenzo church. This church had become the symbol of the

"THE MEDICI SAW THE CHURCH AS A ROUTE TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE"

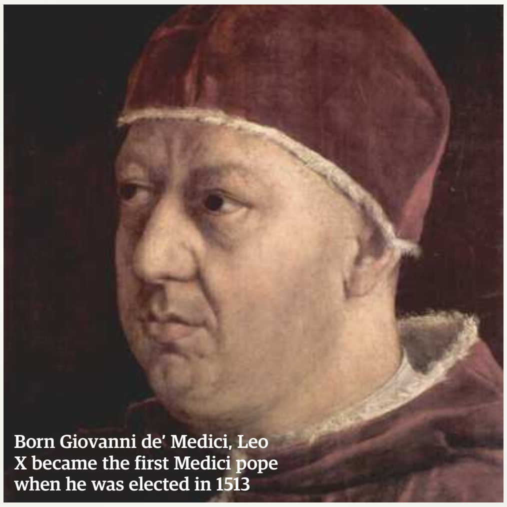


One of Clement VII's final acts was to commission Michelangelo to paint *The Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel in 1534

The nave of San Lorenzo. Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici and his son, Cosimo, were major benefactors to the church's rebuilding



Fra Angelico's lavish altarpiece from San Marco, which was commissioned by Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici in around 1438



Born Giovanni de' Medici, Leo X became the first Medici pope when he was elected in 1513

Medici power in the city, with gifts benefitting both the Church and the family and greatly enhancing their prestige. Leo X, too, spent considerable amounts of money on building projects in Rome, employing artists such as Raphael.

Leo's sudden death in 1521 caused a lull in the family's prestige at the papal court, but this soon changed with the election of another Medici, Clement VII, in 1523 after the reign of the short-lived pope Adrian VI. Under Clement, whose time as pope was troubled by political turmoil, the Medici gained a further cardinal. Eighteen-year-old Ippolito de' Medici was given his red hat in January 1529. Like his two Medici predecessors he lived a far from holy lifestyle, while he was locked in rivalry with his cousin, Alessandro de' Medici, duke of Florence.

Clement VII died in September 1534, with Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici also dying suddenly the following year. Family members continued to spend lavishly on the Church, aware that this helped boost their prestige both in Florence and on an international stage.

The Medici were influential, too, in Vatican politics, with Cosimo I de' Medici, duke of Florence, using his influence to help secure the election of Pope Julius III in 1549, for example. They also assisted in the election of Pius IV in 1559 who repaid them by making Cosimo I's son, Giovanni, a cardinal in 1560. When the young Giovanni died in 1562, the pope made his brother, Ferdinando, a cardinal in his place. Cosimo I's close relationship with Rome was also politically beneficial to him personally, with Pope Pius V elevating him to grand duke of Tuscany in 1569. The appointment was made ostensibly because "the duke has always been a defender of the holy Catholic Church and a great supporter of justice". He was personally crowned by the pope in the Sistine Chapel on 5 March 1570.

The Medici continued to be active in Church politics for the remainder of their dynasty, with Cardinal Ferdinando, who was aware that he was his brother's heir, declining to take his priestly vows in case he secured his inheritance. He succeeded as grand duke in 1587, resigning as cardinal to allow himself to marry.

As grand duke, Ferdinando remained influential in Vatican politics. On 1 April 1605, he helped secure the election of his relative, Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici as Leo XI, although the triumph was brief, with the new pope dying within a month. Medici influence in Rome was restored in 1615 when Carlo de' Medici, brother of Grand Duke Cosimo II, was made a cardinal. The family would continue to produce cardinals for some generations, although there were no further popes.

The Medici family were well aware of the prestige that the Church could bring to their dynasty. While relations were sometimes hostile, the fate of their dynasty was entwined with the politics of the Vatican, as the Medici rose to become princes of the Church.

LEO X:
THE FIRST MEDICI POPE

Charming and fun-loving, Leo X's rise to the papacy finally gave the Medici the throne they had craved. But the new pope and his family found life at the top complicated

Words **June Woolerton**

As he settled into his new role as Leo X, leader of the Catholic Church and ruler of an earthly kingdom glittering with wealth and power, Giovanni de' Medici is reported to have said "since God had given us the Papacy, let us enjoy it". He lived up to his promise. The era of the first Medici pope was characterised by heavy spending, much of it on culture and the advancement of his relatives. Leo X built on his father's ambitions to promote the arts and their family throughout his tenure but his failure to heed other paternal advice cost him dear. His father, Lorenzo the Magnificent, warned him many times against laziness but, in the end, Leo's failure to act as the Protestant Reformation began to take hold in Europe would ultimately end up splitting the Church that he ruled in two.

Leo's laissez-faire attitude had been noted at an early age. Despite that, Lorenzo and his wife, Clarice Orsini, made great plans for their second son, who was born Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence on 11 December 1475. Merely three years later, his older brother, Piero, noted proudly young Giovanni was learning to spell and, throughout their formative years, the Medici siblings would be instructed by some of the great humanists of the age, including Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

But while Piero was raised to take over the family business and its stranglehold on power in Florence, Giovanni was destined for the Church from an early age. He received the tonsure when he was around seven years old and just two years later his father made his first attempts to have him named a cardinal.

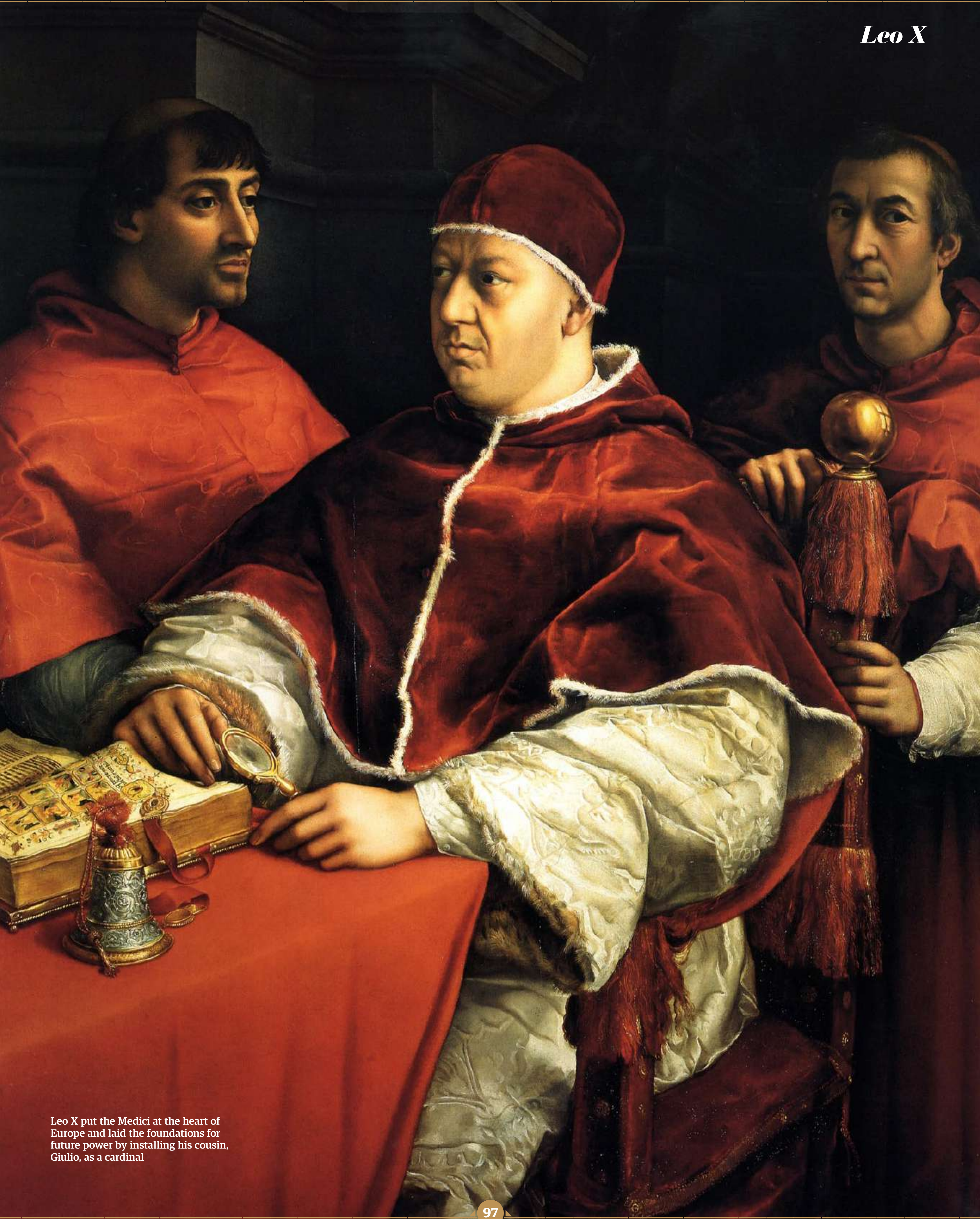
Lorenzo called in favours across Europe to secure important benefices to further his son's ecclesiastical career and bring him a considerable income, while in March 1492 Florence came to a standstill to celebrate confirmation from Rome that the teenage Giovanni was now a cardinal. Soon afterwards, he made his way to Rome and that summer took part in the conclave to elect a successor to Pope Innocent VIII. Lorenzo knew that an early introduction to this powerful world would ensure his son was soon one of the most experienced cardinals in Rome and in a position to decide who held the papal throne - or even rise to it himself.

However, he didn't live to see his ambition fulfilled, dying that year. When the young cleric returned to Florence, he soon saw his family's fortunes turned on their head as the Medici lost power in the city and ended up in exile. Giovanni spent part of his wilderness years in Northern Europe but the death of his brother, Piero, in 1503 made him the head of the family. In the same year, he helped elect Julius II to the papacy. He used his connections well and was appointed papal legate to Bologna and Romagna in 1511, which proved invaluable in his plans to re-establish Medici rule in Florence. The family were in power again by 1512 with Giovanni holding the reins, even if his younger brother, Giuliano, was nominally ruler.

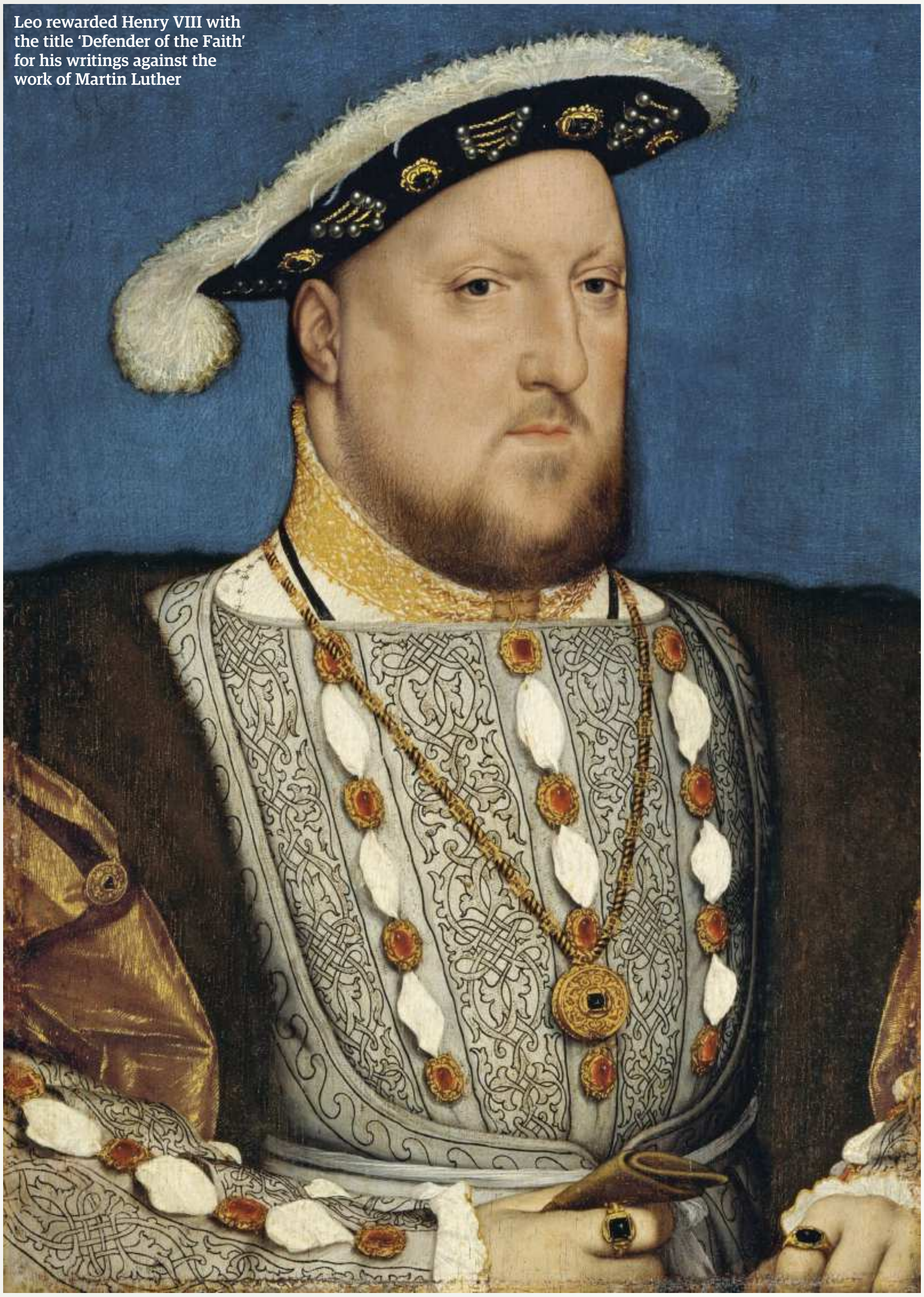
Lorenzo the Magnificent's plans came to fruition in 1513 when Julius II died and Giovanni de' Medici found himself the longest-serving cardinal in the conclave. His political skills had already been put to good use, as he promised favours to those who would support him, and on 11 March 1513 he was elected pope, reading out the result himself as the most senior cleric present. The last non-priest to be elected to the Holy See, he was ordained soon afterwards and crowned on 11 April 1513 as Leo X. The new pope rode through the streets of Rome in a glittering procession past triumphal arches celebrating important moments in his life. The Medici finally had the throne they had craved for so long.

Almost immediately, Leo began to stamp his family's mark on Rome. He assembled a large and attractive court around him including the leading thinkers, artists and musicians of the time. He entertained lavishly, providing exquisite banquets and hospitality to increase his prestige and standing as well as indulge his own taste for the finer things in life. The Medici crest crept across Rome, carved into stone and even embroidered on cushions. Leo spent prodigiously and made no secret of his passion for the worldly sport of hunting and the even worldlier pursuits of partying.

His younger brother, Giuliano, was made a patrician of Rome along with Piero's only son,



Leo X put the Medici at the heart of Europe and laid the foundations for future power by installing his cousin, Giulio, as a cardinal



Leo rewarded Henry VIII with the title 'Defender of the Faith' for his writings against the work of Martin Luther

Lorenzo. Additionally, Leo's cousin, Giulio, was elevated to cardinal within months of his election along with one of the new Pope's nephews, Innocenzo Cibo. Meanwhile, advantageous marriages for other relatives increased Leo's network of power. Their rise from exile to masters of Italy was clearly evident in the motto Leo chose for himself: "In my distress I cried unto the Lord and he heard me".

However, Leo quickly found life at the top brought its own challenges. Now in charge of one of the greatest temporal powers in Europe, he was suddenly a major player in continental politics. Within weeks of his election, Pope Leo X was confronted with a fresh claim by King Louis XII of France for the duchy of Milan. He formed an alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of Spain and England's Henry VIII but when Louis' successor, Francis I, renewed the claims in 1515, Leo eventually made peace with him leading the Spanish monarch to accuse him of having "played a double game".

The following year he was courting England and Spain again as he tried to raise funds to secure the duchy of Urbino for his family. He wanted to create a kingdom in central Italy for his nephew, Lorenzo, and allied himself with those he had abandoned as he pursued this regal ambition. Lorenzo eventually won control of Urbino in 1517 but the cost to his uncle was high.

The cardinals, until then relatively compliant, began to turn against him. When a plot to assassinate him was uncovered, Leo took immediate advantage, arresting leading conspirators with one suffering a grisly death. The pope subsequently appointed 31 new cardinals, the largest number ever at that time. Among them was another cousin, as well as men willing to finance Leo. This meant the pope had surrounded himself with yes men but by then he was in dire need of support.

"LEO'S SPENDING EMPTIED THE PAPAL COFFERS WITHIN TWO YEARS OF HIS ELECTION"

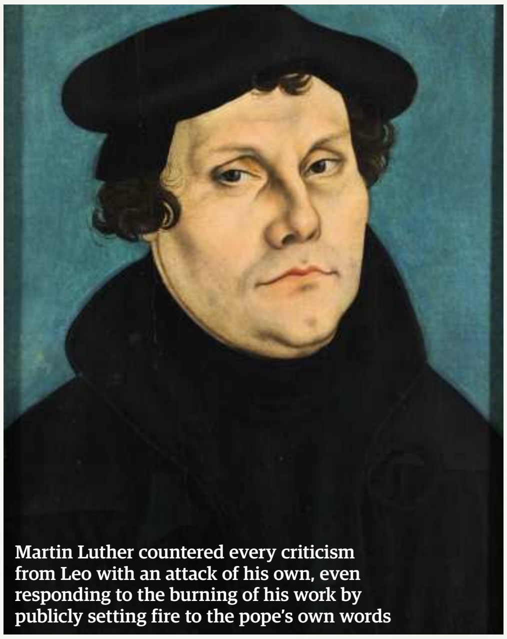
Leo was in serious money difficulties. His spending had emptied the papal coffers within two years of his election and made a serious dent in his own fortune. His pet projects, including Raphael's work on St Peter's Basilica and the expansion of the Roman University, drained his resources as did his support for the arts and his love of luxury. He was so strapped for cash at one point that he took the decision to pawn statutes of the apostles and the papal jewels.

His need for money also led him to approve the sale of indulgences. Those rich enough could buy themselves the promise of eternal salvation in return for a fee that went straight to the papacy. However, by 1517, a monk in Germany was so angered by the practice he wrote a treatise against it. But Leo failed to realise just how significant this action was, even when the angry cleric - Martin Luther - pinned his *95 Theses* to the door of Wittenberg Church.

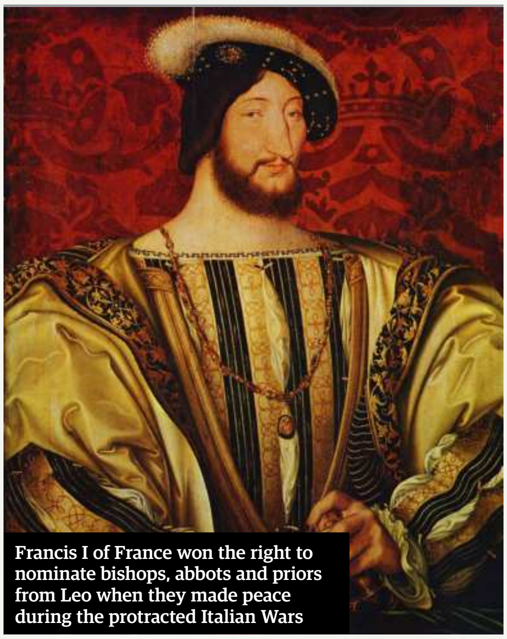
The pope told the head of Luther's order in Germany, the Augustinians, to resolve the problem and issued a papal bull requiring all Christians to believe in the right to sell indulgences. However, that came almost a year after Luther's famous act, by which time his message had spread across Europe via printed leaflets.

Occupied by money worries and further political wranglings caused by a dispute over succession to the Holy Roman Empire, Leo decided to tackle the issue with what he called "great care". In reality, he delayed until 1520 before really addressing Luther's ideas, warning him in the bull 'Exsurge Domine' to recant much of his writing or face excommunication. Leo's secular allies rallied to his cause, with Henry VIII attacking Luther in

Leo was laid to rest at Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome as befitting a pope



Martin Luther countered every criticism from Leo with an attack of his own, even responding to the burning of his work by publicly setting fire to the pope's own words



Francis I of France won the right to nominate bishops, abbots and priors from Leo when they made peace during the protracted Italian Wars

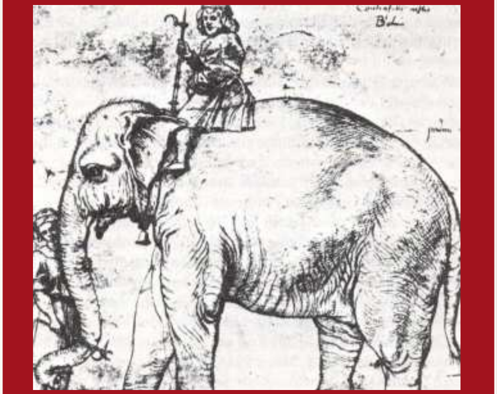
writing and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, convening the Diet of Worms, which ended in the condemnation of Luther and his work.

But by the time Leo excommunicated Luther in 1521, with another bull 'Decet Romanum Pontificem', dissent with the Church was growing across Europe with another major uprising starting in Scandinavia. His father's fears about Leo's laissez-faire attitude had been proven right.

Exhausted, Leo was involved in yet more wrangles over French claims to Italy when he fell suddenly ill. His death, on 1 December 1521, was so quick that rumours immediately sprang up that he had been murdered. Given the hot and fevered pace of his court, they were all but inevitable. Leo's story came to an end in the cool confines of a Roman church where he was buried with full honours. And although his end had been dramatic and his legacy complicated, he had sewn the seeds of a new type of power for the Medici family and ensured another family member was waiting in the wings to once more assume the papal throne.

THE POPE'S ELEPHANT

Leo X spent, spent, spent to turn his court into the epitome of luxury but one of his favourite luxuries was a very unusual gift from a friend



Hanno the elephant became a regular in papal outings but the stress of public display once led him to tip a rider into a muddy stream

Leo X's Rome was colourful and chaotic and the Pope's love of excess and luxury was never clearer than in his choice of pet. Hanno the elephant had his own place in the papal entourage and Leo loved him so much that he had Raphael paint him for posterity.

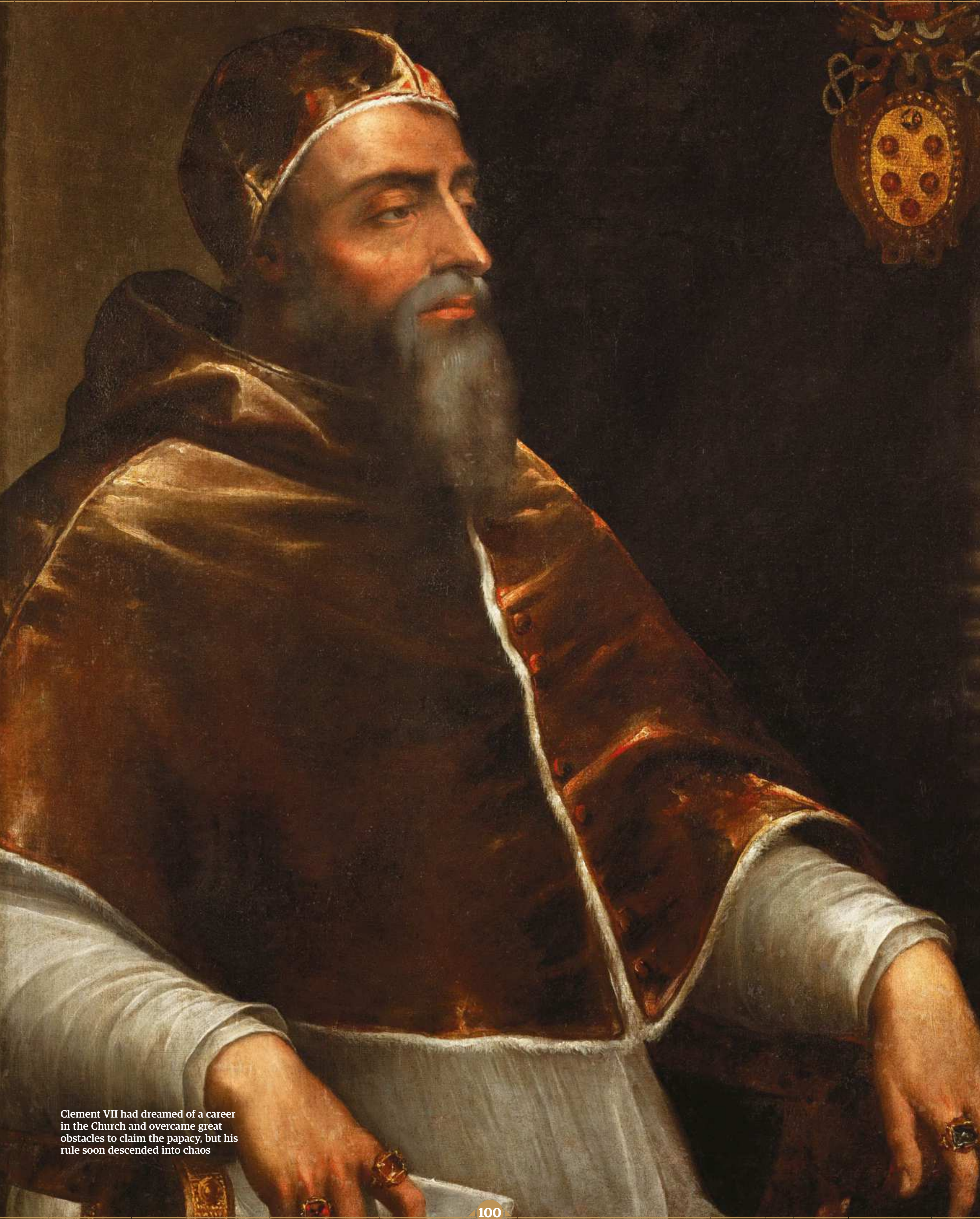
The elephant was a gift from King Manuel I of Portugal, a good friend of Pope Leo, who had himself received the animal as a present from Cochin in India. Hanno arrived in Rome in 1514 and Leo took immediate delight in him.

Like his new owner, Hanno was known for his fun-loving nature. Leo loved to show him off doing some of the tricks he had been taught. He also had him decked in finery to take part in processions and the pet became a regular sight on the streets of Rome.

It was just one example of the excess which became the norm for Leo. Although he won praise for his love of culture and his modern attitude towards integration - which saw him encourage the establishment of a printing press for the Jewish community in Rome - it was his fun-loving side that really caught attention.

Soon after his election, he doubled the money covering the cost of the food and drink served at the papal palace, while he kept numerous buffoons to entertain him among his ever-increasing household. His staff also included a keeper to look after Hanno.

The white elephant died in Rome in 1518, leaving Leo heartbroken. He ordered Raphael to paint a life-size image of his beloved pet on the wall of the Vatican's gatehouse. The portrait itself is long gone but the legend of the pope who kept an elephant lives on.



Clement VII had dreamed of a career in the Church and overcame great obstacles to claim the papacy, but his rule soon descended into chaos

CLEMENT VII: THE UNLUCKY POPE

Clement VII watched Rome burn as his political policies fell apart, while religious opponents took advantage of his troubles to further fragment the Church he ruled

Words **June Woolerton**

Clement VII attained his greatest ambition and wielded considerable power, but in many ways the second Medici pope was an unlucky man. From his earliest days until his last, fortune rarely favoured him. But he was also the architect of his own unhappiness, and even when circumstances went his way, he suffered from a trait rarely seen in the Medici: indecision. It would prove to be his greatest misfortune of all.

In some ways, his luck ran out before he was born. His father, Giuliano de' Medici, was stabbed to death exactly a month before his son's birth, murdered by rivals on Easter Sunday 1478 as the Pazzi conspiracy unfolded. By the time his posthumous son, Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, arrived on 26 May, the family were back in control of Florence. Baby Giulio became a symbol of hope for the dynasty and the city of Florence that they ruled, but the child himself had the taint of illegitimacy upon him.

He was still a Medici though, and his father's brother, Lorenzo, had him brought up alongside his own children at the Palazzo Medici. Giulio's mother, whose identity is still disputed, disappeared from his life at an early stage. Giulio rubbed shoulders with some of the finest thinkers of the age, as Lorenzo brought humanists including Angelo Poliziano to his house to educate the next generation of Medici. One of Giulio's earliest companions was Giovanni de' Medici, Lorenzo's second son, who was just three years older than his cousin. It was the beginning of a friendship that would have a huge impact on the Medici's standing on the world stage.

However, as they approached their teenage years, Giulio's prospects looked much bleaker. He had shown an interest in a Church career but his illegitimacy made high office there unattainable. Instead, Lorenzo encouraged him to pursue military interests. But on his uncle's death, Giulio came under the increasing influence of his cousin, Giovanni, who had just been made a cardinal.

Giulio studied canon law at the University of Pisa, but just as it appeared his luck had turned, the Medici were forced into exile. He and Giovanni travelled through Europe together, so when the dynasty retook Florence, Giulio was well placed. Giovanni had become head of the family and their closeness paid dividends in 1513 when the cardinal was elected pope.

Now Leo X, Giovanni de' Medici was determined his family would benefit from his great office, and top of the list was Giulio. He was quickly made Archbishop of Florence and soon afterwards, Leo declared him legitimate. Six months after the election of the first Medici pope, Giulio had been made a cardinal.

For once fortune favoured him. He became a close adviser to his cousin and was widely praised for his work at the court of Leo X. Despite the pope's excesses, Giulio's involvement in his foreign policy and in implementing Church reforms was well regarded, and when he was given the responsibility of overseeing Florence in 1519, his reputation was boosted further.

His status increased as he acted as adviser to Leo's successor, Adrian VI. Meanwhile, his patronage of the arts, including his support of Raphael, added to his good name. When Adrian VI died a year after his election to the Holy See, Giulio was seen as a frontrunner to replace him. His election to the papacy, on 19 November 1523, saw the illegitimate child become the leader of the Catholic Church and one of the greatest secular rulers in Europe.

But his temporal offices would prove problematic for Giulio, who chose to rule as Pope Clement VII. During Leo's time as pope, Clement had helped play two of the continent's greatest powers off against each other as they went to war within the Italian states. Now, he was faced with further disputes between the Holy Roman Emperor and France, but his well-worn policy was about to prove his undoing.

When Francis I of France and Emperor Charles V clashed over Milan, Clement's decision to flip-flop between the two powers proved disastrous. Clement ultimately believed the emperor to be more of a threat to peace, and was also concerned about his influence within the Church itself. But he ended up backing Charles following the Battle of Pavia in 1525, in which Francis was captured.

However, once the French king was free, he changed sides again. In 1526, he and Francis joined the League of Cognac, which saw them combine forces with Milan and Venice against the emperor.

Charles was understandably furious and began to work with one of Clement's enemies at the papal court, Cardinal Colonna, whose great ambition was to assassinate the pope. However, one of the Emperor's other actions was about to prove even more unlucky for Clement.

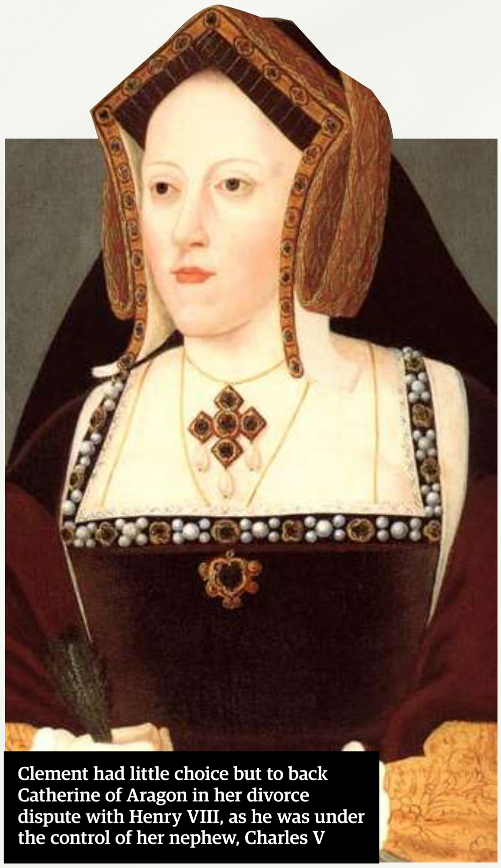
The imperial troops in Italy hadn't been paid and they set their sights on Rome. Clement had already seen the Eternal City attacked by Colonna in the autumn of 1526, but he had soon seen off that challenge. But when Charles's angry soldiers arrived in Rome on 6 May 1527, he wasn't so lucky. The Roman defences numbered about 8,000 while the imperial forces, including Spanish and German troops, were four times as large. Clement VII was forced to flee to the Castel Sant'Angelo as the Sack of Rome began.

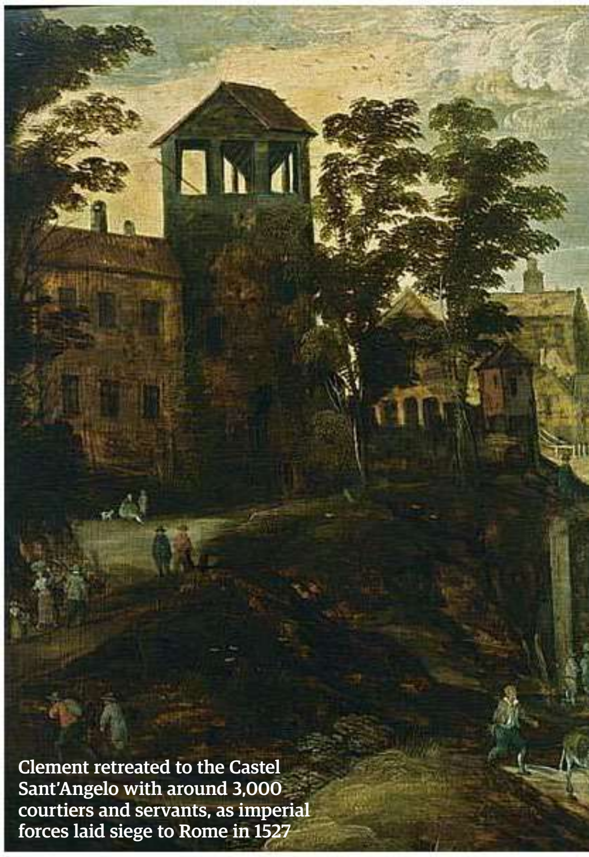
Imperial forces quickly conquered the city before attacking its buildings, its art and its people. Thousands of people were murdered, while others were taken hostage and killed if the exorbitant ransoms demanded for their safety weren't paid. Many more fled from the city. Churches, palaces and hospitals were raided and priceless artworks stolen, and food became scarce. Those that remained were hit by the diseases that began to spread as corpses lay unburied. Clement was forced to make peace with Charles, who took advantage of the situation to extract money and territory from the pope. By the time Clement returned to Rome in 1528, he was 400,000 ducats poorer and bound to Charles's cause, while the once-proud papal city was in ruins.

At the same time, Henry VIII of England had begun to lobby the pope as he sought an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Henry claimed his union went against the Church's teachings, as his wife had been his older brother's widow. Clement refused to help, but behind his publicly made religious arguments lay political pressure. Catherine was aunt to the emperor, Charles, who held the upper hand over the pope.

Henry succeeded in getting Clement to send a papal legate to an ecclesiastical court he convened in England to hear his petition to end the marriage, but the Roman representative withdrew quickly and Clement shut down debate, hoping the issue would go away. Instead, he was relegated to a bit-part player by Henry, who ignored Clement's Bull of 1530 which forbade him taking a new wife. Henry, who appointed bishops without papal approval to ensure men who would do his bidding held sway, put aside Catherine to wed Anne Boleyn in 1533. By then, he had also started limiting payments from

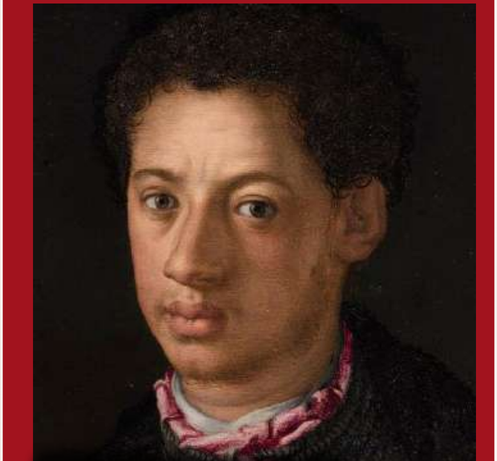
“HIS FAMILY WAS FORCED FROM POWER AND FROM THE CITY”


Clement had little choice but to back Catherine of Aragon in her divorce dispute with Henry VIII, as he was under the control of her nephew, Charles V


Clement retreated to the Castel Sant'Angelo with around 3,000 courtiers and servants, as imperial forces laid siege to Rome in 1527

THE POPE'S SON?

The first Medici to act as a hereditary ruler was a tragic figure whose disputed paternity followed him throughout his short life


Called 'Il Moro' by contemporaries on account of his dark complexion and tightly curled hair, Alessandro's parentage is still a source of debate

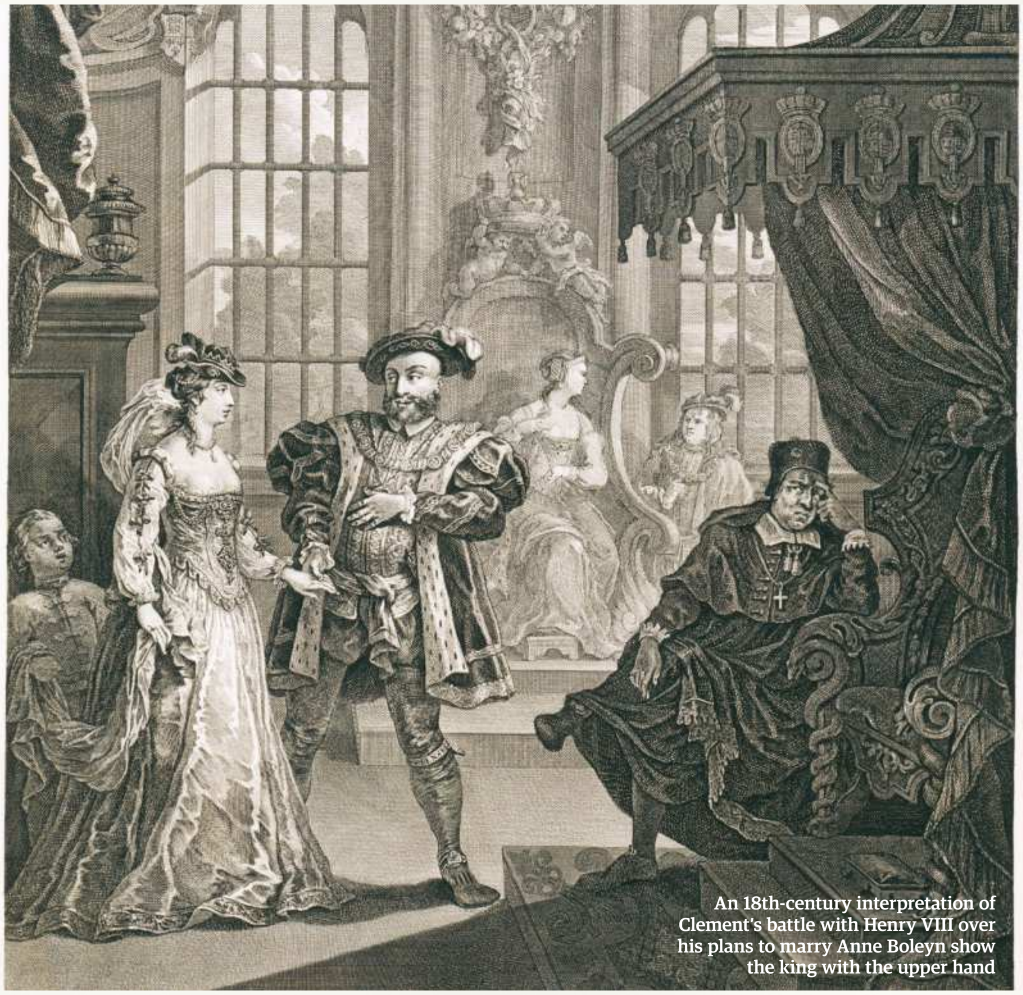
When Clement VII selected his kinsman Alessandro de' Medici to rule Florence after the dynasty was restored to power in 1530, it only served to fuel rumours that the young man was in fact the pope's own son.

At the time of his birth, on 22 July 1510 in Florence, Alessandro's paternity was ascribed to the then-unmarried Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent. However, rumours soon spread that his real father was Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, an illegitimate nephew of the great Lorenzo.

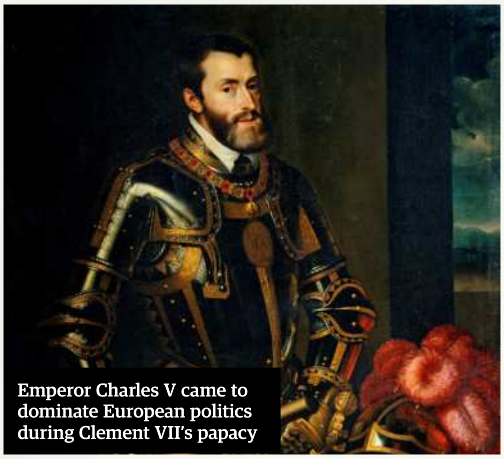
His maternity was never in doubt. Alessandro was born to a black servant called Simonetta. She was released from servitude after the birth of her son, meaning the child, regardless of his paternity, would enjoy free status. In her later years, she wrote to Alessandro asking for financial help for herself, her husband and two later children.

Alessandro had a typical Medici upbringing, enjoying a good education against a backdrop of dynastic tensions and attacks on his family's power. When Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici became Pope Clement VII in 1523, he began to favour Alessandro. When the Medici regained control of Florence in 1530, Clement chose Alessandro as the city's new ruler, and helped secure the heredity title of duke of Florence for him from Emperor Charles V.

Alessandro's rule proved to be difficult, and he gained a reputation for harshness before he was murdered by another kinsman, Lorenzino, who said he was acting for the sake of the Republic of Florence. But the favours showered on him by Clement VII only encouraged whispers that Alessandro was in fact Giulio's child.



An 18th-century interpretation of Clement's battle with Henry VIII over his plans to marry Anne Boleyn show the king with the upper hand



Emperor Charles V came to dominate European politics during Clement VII's papacy

the English Church to Rome. Clement could do little as reformation took hold of Henry's England.

In fact, reformers were beginning to enjoy success across the continent, with the Prussian and Saxon leaders among those to convert to the new religion early on in Clement's reign. During his enforced captivity following the Sack of Rome, the new faith was officially installed as a state religion in Sweden and Denmark, too. Meanwhile, Martin Luther, whose rise to prominence had been left unchecked by Clement's cousin, Leo X, was leading the charge for the further rise of Protestantism.

Clement, however, was too preoccupied with Italian matters to deal effectively with this challenge to his Church. In 1527, Florence had rebelled against the Medici after Clement had drained its resources to fight his continental wars. His family was forced from power and from the city itself, while the Pope was forced to beg Charles V for help to restore his dynasty. Their protracted negotiations saw Clement agree to a splendid coronation for Charles, while imperial demands to cover the cost of troops further emptied the papacy's already struggling coffers. In the end, Florence was returned to the Medici pope following a siege that saw thousands of people die from starvation. He had sacrificed his home city to save his family's power.

He nominated Alessandro de' Medici, long rumoured to be his natural son, as ruler of Florence, but Charles held off a ducal title for the new leader until 1532, by which time Clement's health was beginning to fail. With his eye still on glory for the Medici, he arranged the marriage of his niece, Catherine, to Henri, son of King Francis I of France, but remained under the influence of the emperor.

The pope took refuge in art in his later years, and one of his final acts was to commission Michelangelo to paint *The Last Judgement* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. But he didn't live to see it completed. Clement died on 25 September 1534 and was buried in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome.

The city which bade farewell to Clement was a shadow of the place it had been when he took the papal throne. Rome, like much under this Medici pope's control, had ultimately suffered through his lack of judgement and luck.

CATHERINE DE' MEDICI: QUEEN OF INFAMY

The woman who planned to exalt the Valois dynasty presided over its demise

Words **Derek Wilson**

An early biographer of France's Italian queen observed, "Personal affection was offered her so rarely throughout her life that there was little need for her to learn how to cope with it." It was a perceptive judgement; female members of Europe's royalty in the 16th century well understood that love was a rare luxury that they could seldom, if ever, enjoy. Yet even when that has been acknowledged, there remains something of the ice maiden about Catherine de' Medici. Her cruelty, her Machiavellian pragmatism and her cold calculation have become legendary. Many contemporaries didn't hesitate to accuse her of being in league with the devil, and she was often referred to as the 'Italian witch'. But if we want to understand her, we must explore her background.

Catherine was born around 1519 into the 'almost royal' House of Medici. Her great grandfather was Lorenzo the Magnificent, and her family tree was laden with dukes and cardinals – even the occasional pope. They had dominated life in Florence for 75 years. But exalted status didn't bestow protection from the misfortunes to which all men and women are prone. Within a month of her birth, both of Catherine's parents had succumbed to fatal illnesses.

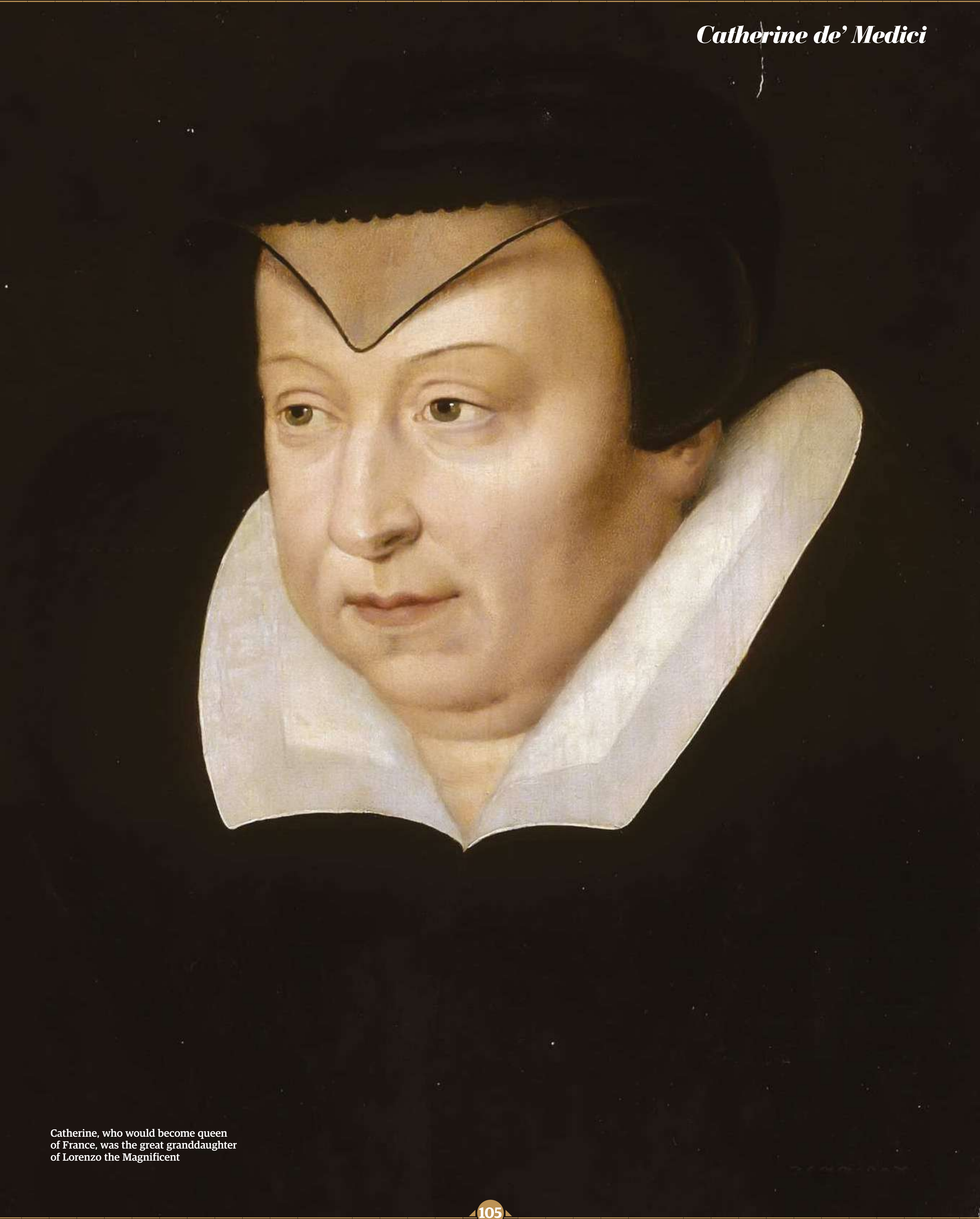
As a Medici girl, Catherine's role was clearly mapped out for her: she was a pawn in the dynastic ambitions of her family. She was brought up by female relatives until the time when she could be groomed for some suitable marriage. At least, that was the plan – it was disrupted in 1527 by the hard-edged reality of faction politics. As a result of popular rebellion, the Florentines threw off the Medici yoke. Catherine was removed from family control and placed in a convent.

Her experiences in war-torn Florence marked her for life. She enjoyed the religious regimen of the nuns and embraced a profound Catholicism. At this stage of life, when childhood was drawing to a close, she would have loved to have taken religious vows, but she also became fully aware of her political importance – she was a bargaining chip in the hands of her captors. Yet her dominant emotion must have been one of fear.

In 1529, Pope Clement VII (the same pontiff who refused to annul Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon) was determined to restore his family's fortunes and appealed to the Emperor Charles V to launch a military offensive against the rebels, and Florence suffered the horrors of a ten-month siege from October 1529 to August 1530. The tensions of war divided those who held power within the city, and at one stage the more radical republicans handed Catherine over to the imperial troops to use as they wished. By the time the siege was lifted, the 11-year-old duchessina had received an extensive practical education in the harsh realities of power politics.

She was about to become more personally involved in those politics. Pope Clement restored Medici control to Florence and sought to buttress it with powerful alliances. Catherine, now approaching marriageable age, was hawked around Europe's royalty as a potential bride, and the suitor most favoured by Clement was Henry, Duke of Orléans, second son of King Francis of France. By binding the French crown to the papacy, Clement hoped to balance the major political powers of Europe and curb the might of his erstwhile ally, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In 1533 Catherine was escorted to Marseille, and there the wedding took place on 28 October.

The bride and groom were both 14 years of age and Catherine might well have been thankful not to find herself tied to a much older husband. However, that was the only consolation her new state brought her. She felt no affection for her spouse, nor he for her. As a blood prince, Henry had the pick of whichever ladies took his fancy, and



Catherine, who would become queen of France, was the great granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent he kept a succession of mistresses. Catherine was well aware that her role was that of a child-bearer, and therein lay her next sadness: despite frequent efforts, she and Henry conceived no children. This could have been disastrous for her - if her childlessness continued, the French royal family might have found some means of discarding her. The situation became more serious in 1536. In that year, Henry's older brother died, so he was now heir to the throne of France.

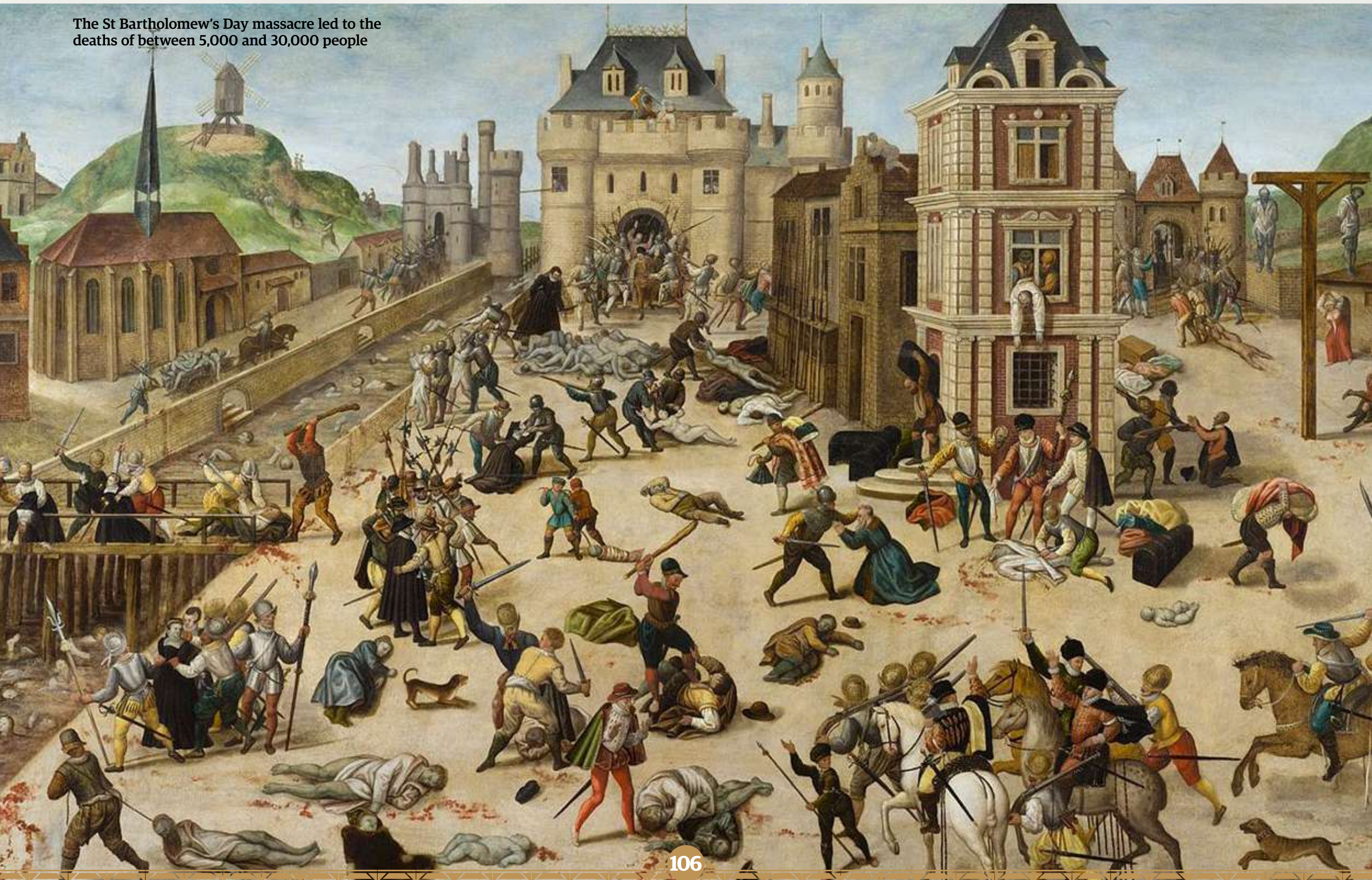
Catherine tried everything she could think of to get pregnant. She consulted astrologers and necromancers, and it was in these years that she incurred suspicions of witchcraft. To add to her woes there was Diane de Poitiers, Henry's principal mistress; though she was about 20 years the prince's senior, he loved her passionately. She was appointed the princess's principal lady-in-waiting and it seems that she served faithfully in that capacity. Yet, understandably, it irked Catherine that another woman enjoyed not only her husband's love, but also his complete confidence. After Henry's death, she lost no time in banishing Diane from the court.

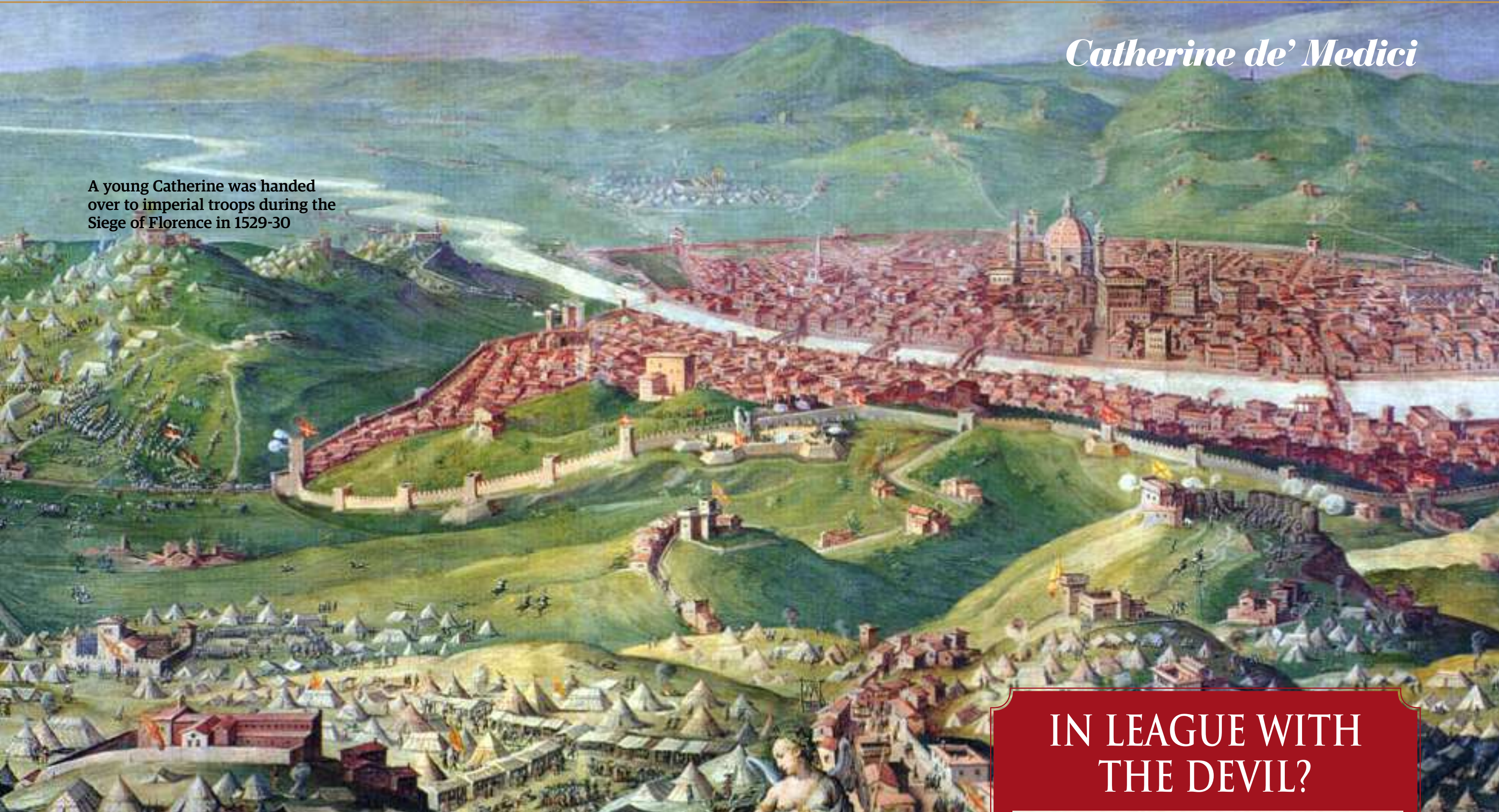
But that was well in the future in 1543. This was the year when everything changed for Catherine. She became pregnant and, in the following January, she gave birth to a son, named Francis. Whatever had wrought this change of fortune now worked abundantly well, with Catherine having a further eight children, most of whom survived infancy. In 1547 King Francis died and she found herself queen consort of France, duly crowned in the abbey church of Saint-Denis. She might now have expected her future to settle into a conventional and high-profile routine. High profile it certainly was. Conventional? Never. Catherine was caught up in the defence of two causes - the royal dynasty and Catholicism.

The first warning signs of the religious conflict that was to tear the nation apart had appeared within months of Catherine's arrival in France. In October 1534, garish posters were pasted up in Paris and other cities attacking the central Catholic doctrine of the mass. The event, known as the Affair of the Placards, was the work of religious radicals who had espoused the doctrines of the French theologian John Calvin, a brilliant lawyer who had been forced to flee and settle in Geneva. There he wrote a detailed synthesis of Christian belief entitled *The Institution of the Christian Religion* (commonly known as Calvin's *Institutes*), which offered believers a comprehensive system of doctrine and practice based on the Bible rather than the traditions of the Catholic Church that had evolved over the centuries. It was the manifesto of what became known as the Reformed Church and proposed a system not only of abstract theology, but also of applied theology. Calvinism set out a system for the structure and working of an ideal Christian state, and it captured Geneva and adjacent countries like France, where it spread rapidly. French enemies of this new 'heresy' dubbed its followers 'Huguenots'.

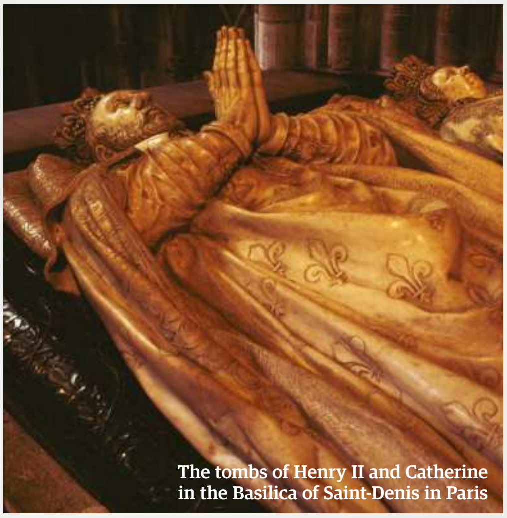
The reformed religion was seen as a threat to civil order, not only because it challenged the beliefs on which the power of the priesthood rested, but because it was taken up by elements in society enflamed by social grievances - elements that, if not checked, might spread civil unrest. Twenty-four protesters were burned as heretics following the Affair of the Placards, and 200 or so were imprisoned. But persecution,

“THE REFORMED RELIGION WAS SEEN AS A THREAT TO CIVIL ORDER”

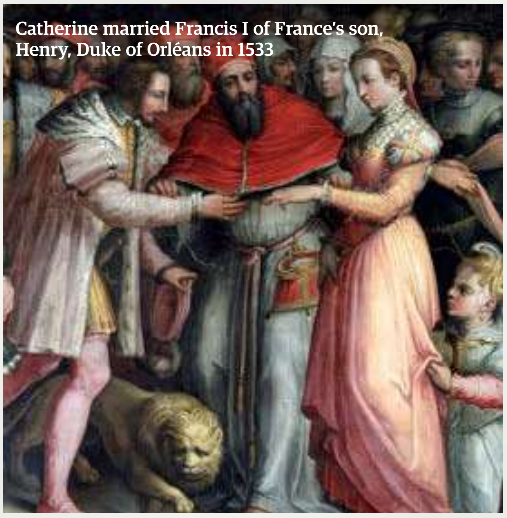

The St Bartholomew's Day massacre led to the deaths of between 5,000 and 30,000 people



A young Catherine was handed over to imperial troops during the Siege of Florence in 1529-30



The tombs of Henry II and Catherine in the Basilica of Saint-Denis in Paris



Catherine married Francis I of France's son, Henry, Duke of Orléans in 1533

as often happens, instead of stamping out the Reformed faith, encouraged the growing number of Huguenots to stand firm. This presented government with a dilemma - whether to suppress the movement with all the power at its command, or to exercise a measure of toleration.

What now made conflict more complex and more intense was that it became intermingled with dynastic rivalries. Leading aristocratic families, backed by their extensive patronage networks, took up the causes of the Catholics or the Huguenots. Old family feuds went into the bubbling cauldron of discontent, as did arguments about the powers of the Crown and the aristocracy. Leaders of the Guise family emerged as champions of the Catholic cause, while Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France, and the prince of Condé led the Huguenot challenge. Their animosities gave oxygen to the conflagration known as the French Wars of Religion, which blazed from 1562 to 1598.

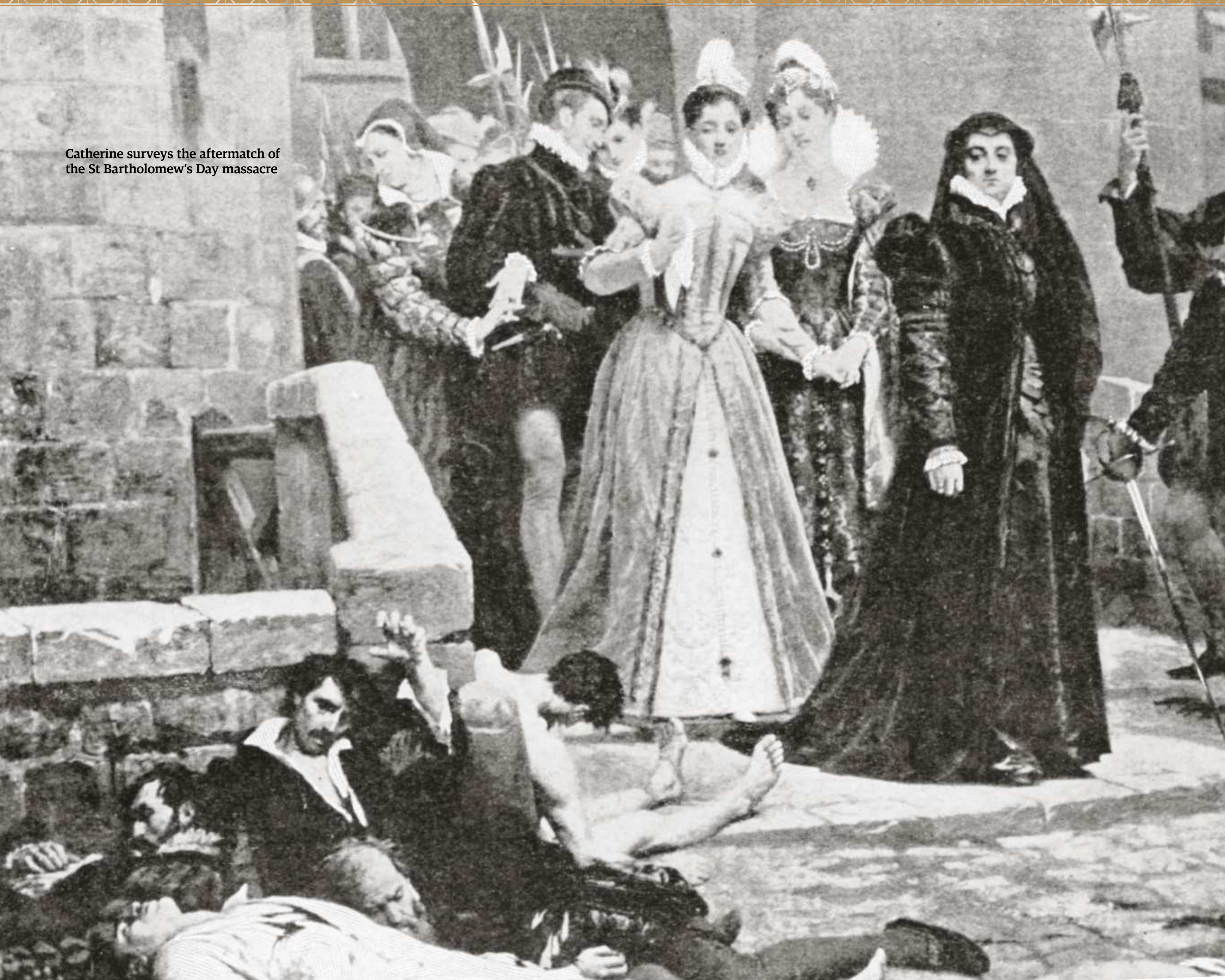
Catherine could have stood aloof from the political struggle had it not been for a series of personal, dynastic and national tragedies that propelled her into the van of the battle. In 1559 her husband, now Henry II of France, died as the result of a jousting accident, and Catherine, now 40, was the mother of four young sons. This should have been enough to steady the Valois dynasty, even in the stormy seas through which it was sailing. It was the death, in turn, of each of her sons that

IN LEAGUE WITH THE DEVIL?

In an age that was both appalled and fascinated by the occult, it was inevitable that someone as powerful and unpopular as Catherine de' Medici should be suspected of dabbling in the black arts. Most 16th-century rulers employed astrologers to advise them on the most propitious times to undertake important enterprises, and Catherine was no exception.

With a life so full of twists and turns, it's not surprising that Catherine resorted to 'seers' for advice. The most notable was Michel de Nostredame (Nostradamus), an apothecary and astrologer. In 1555 he published his celebrated *Les Prophéties*, a collection of small poems supposedly foretelling future events. Catherine summoned him to Paris believing that he had received supernatural revelations about threats to her and her children. Being asked to produce horoscopes for the ill-fated royal family was a risky business, yet the queen mother's belief in him never faltered and she appointed him counsellor and physician-in-ordinary to the young King Charles IX.

Another trusted servant of Catherine's was the physician Ambroise Paré, a covert Huguenot. So suspect was the relationship between them that it was even rumoured that he had poisoned Francis II on her orders. Such gossip about "that foreign woman", as some insisted on calling her, reflected little more than her unpopularity. Any serious consorting with evil powers, if such did take place, were more indicative of her anxiety and insecurity than any serious attempts to manipulate fate.

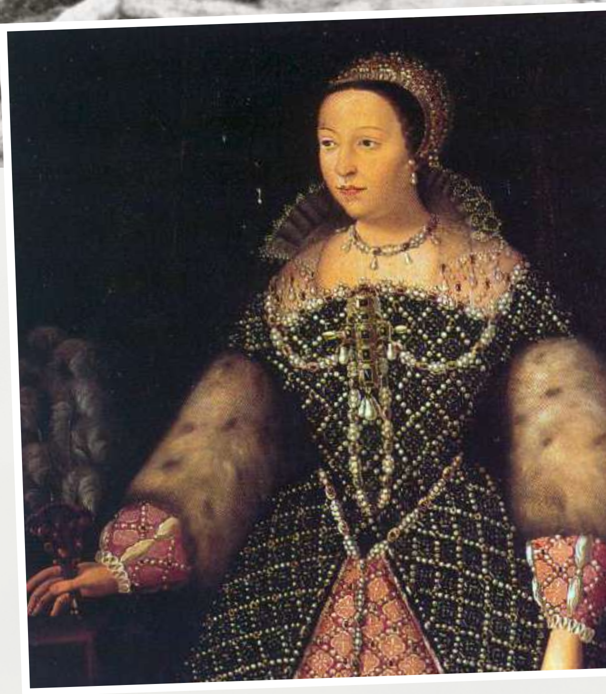


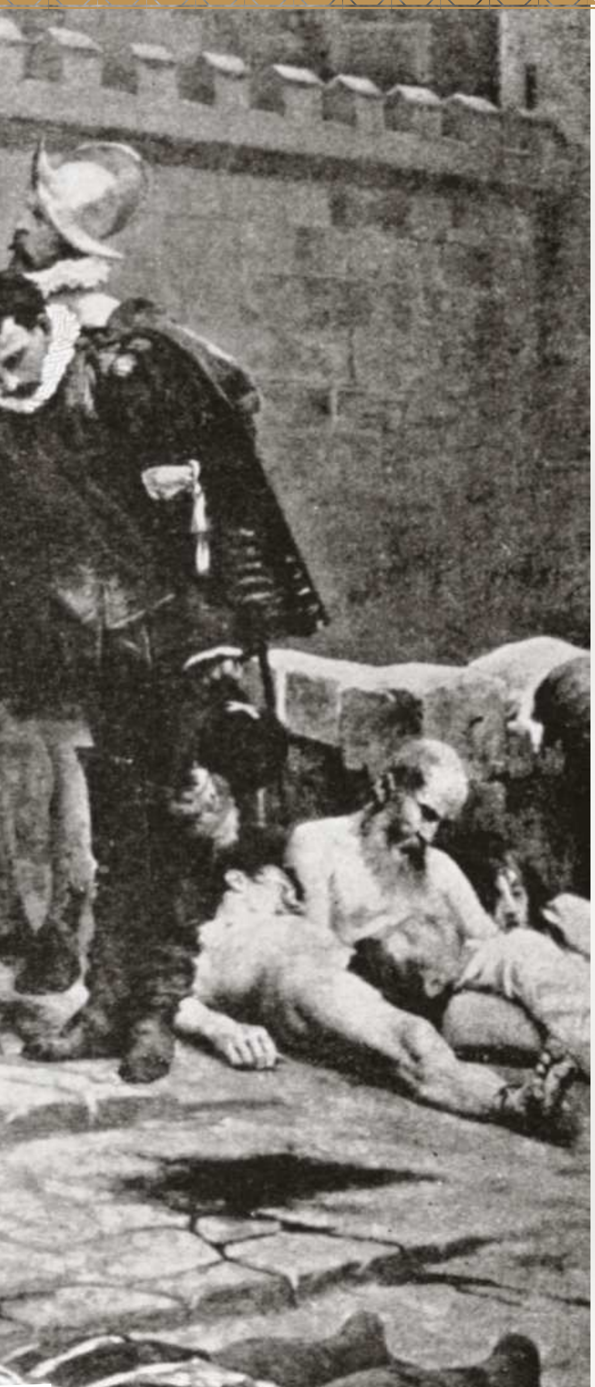
Catherine surveys the aftermatch of the St Bartholomew's Day massacre

obliged her to become a director of national policy. In 1560 her eldest boy, Francis II, died after a reign of just 17 months. His successor was the ten-year-old Charles IX. Both aristocratic factions vied for influence over him while they were engaged in military encounters. Catherine used her influence to broker a series of deals aimed at halting the strife and securing an element of compromise. Edicts of pacification were agreed at Amboise (1563), Longjumeau (1568) and Saint-Germain (1570), but none of them lasted very long.

One attempt to achieve unity went spectacularly wrong. Catherine arranged a marriage between her daughter Margaret (brought up as a conventional Catholic) and the Huguenot King Henry of Navarre. Most of the leading members of the contending factions came to Paris for the wedding on 18 August 1572, and one of them was Coligny, a brave soldier and a committed Huguenot. This charismatic figure was greatly admired by the 22-year-old king. Catherine bitterly resented Coligny's influence; this was Diane all over again – someone insinuating himself into the position the queen mother believed to be hers and hers alone.

Catherine's hatred knew no bounds. She wrote petulantly to her son, "I can hardly believe… that after sacrificing myself for you and taking so many risks that you would recompense me like this." Her revenge was a terrible example of Congreve's adage, 'Hell has no fury like a woman scorned'. She set an assassin to gun Coligny down in the street. He botched the job and, by so doing, created the situation Catherine had most feared. There was now a real likelihood of a Huguenot backlash.





"CATHERINE BITTERLY RESENTED COLIGNY'S INFLUENCE; THIS WAS DIANE ALL OVER AGAIN"

To avoid this, the Catholic faction struck first, and a political coup became a religion-inspired bloodbath. Coligny and several other Protestant leaders were hacked down, the situation spiralling out of hand. Catholic gangs rampaged through the streets, murdering every Huguenot they could lay hands on. Bloodlust swept the country, claiming thousands. The St Bartholomew's Day massacre left an indelible stain on Catherine's character that has never been expunged. It prolonged the civil war for another quarter of a century.

Twenty-one months later, Catherine, now 55, sat once more at a deathbed. Charles IX died of a wasting disease, having nominated his mother to act as regent. Henry III was crowned in February 1575, but if the queen mother had assumed that the new king would rely on her experience, she was soon disillusioned. In fact, during her remaining years the heaviest burden she had to bear was the disobedience of her two remaining sons.

Henry chose the regnal style of a Catholic dictator, and his refusal to grant any concessions to the Huguenots intensified the war that was already ruining the country financially. His refusal to discuss affairs of state frustrated his council, but what was perhaps the worst disappointment of all was that his marriage was childless. Uncertainty about the future turned the Wars of Religion into conflicts over the succession, as aristocratic factions struggled to get their hands on the crown.

Catherine's youngest son, Francis, Duke of Anjou, was a trial for quite different reasons. He was only 19 when his brother came to the throne and he was totally out of sympathy with the new regime. Within months he had left the court in order to join the Huguenot army led by the prince of Condé, which defeated the royal force and compelled Henry III to make concessions to the despised Protestants. Anjou now pursued an independent political career based on his own high ambitions. He attempted to marry Elizabeth I of England, something that alarmed many of her subjects. Poet Sir Philip Sidney denounced the proposed alliance of the queen with a son of "that Jezebel of our age". Anjou then transferred his attention to the Netherlands, where he fought to help the Protestants throw off the yoke of Philip II of Spain. After this debacle he returned to Paris and was reconciled to his brother, but he had contracted malaria on campaign and in June 1584 he died.

Effective power fell into the hands of the Catholic League, a mass movement headed by the duke of Guise and his brother. The very situation Catherine had fought to prevent - political power falling into the hands of an aristocratic faction - had become reality. But Henry III had one more trick up his sleeve: in December 1588, he summoned the Guise brothers to a special meeting. There the duke was murdered and his brother arrested.

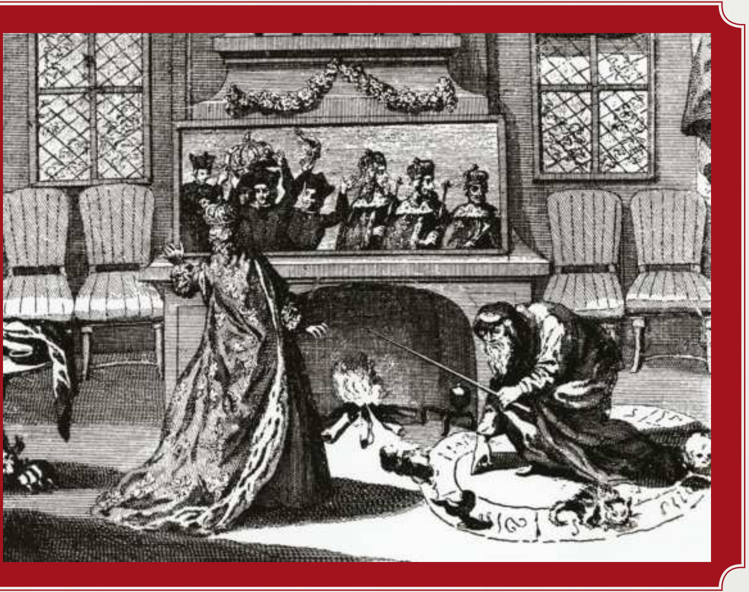
Needless to say, Catherine had not been consulted and she well knew the backlash the king's actions would cause. Nine months later, Henry, Catherine's last son, fell to an assassin's dagger. The House of Valois had plunged to its own destruction and Catherine, who had striven hard to preserve it, had unwittingly contributed to its downfall. She didn't live to see it. On 5 January 1589, she had died at the age of 69.

CATHERINE AS PATRONESS

It was inconceivable that a Medici would not be interested in the arts. In her childhood, Catherine had been familiar with the great Renaissance collections amassed by her ancestors, and as a guest of Clement VII, who commissioned Michelangelo for the Sistine Chapel, she could gaze on the works of Raphael and other masters commissioned for the Vatican by the spendthrift Leo X.

In France, Catherine entered an artistic milieu fashioned by her father-in-law, Francis I, who had deliberately brought Renaissance influences across the Alps. She was expected to extend her patronage to painters, sculptors, musicians and men of letters, and to surround herself with scholars and poets. This was an aspect of her role she took up with enthusiasm. She had a passion for portraits and amassed a considerable collection, including works by the great miniaturist François Clouet. Catherine attempted, unsuccessfully, to lure Michelangelo to France to execute a statue of Henry II, but she did commission works by native sculptors.

Architecture was her greatest interest. Royal buildings, as well as being prestigious residences for her family and for receiving important guests, were structures that would impress her splendour and that of the Valois dynasty on future generations. She embellished several existing royal châteaux and built new ones, her most ambitious being the Tuileries in Paris.



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COSIMO II: PATRON OF SCIENCE

Showing little interest in governing, Cosimo II is remembered chiefly as a patron of science, protecting Galileo from attacks by the Church

Words **Elizabeth Norton**

Cosimo II's birth was much anticipated, but he failed to live up to the glories of his grandfather and namesake, Cosimo I. Although Cosimo II would reign in Tuscany for 12 years, he played little active role in government.

Cosimo II was born in 1590, the eldest child of Grand Duke Ferdinando I, who had resigned his cardinal's hat to take the family inheritance on the death of his brother when he was 38 years old. Anxious to provide Tuscany with an heir, Ferdinando, who had conveniently never taken holy orders, hurriedly married his distant cousin, Christina of Lorraine, becoming a first-time father at the, then, advanced age of 40. Cosimo, who was the first legitimate grandson of Cosimo I to survive infancy, was raised aware of his destiny to become grand duke of Tuscany. His birth was announced to widespread rejoicing, as church bells rang throughout the night. His father distributed alms at the Palazzo Pitti, while there followed three days of fireworks and feasting.

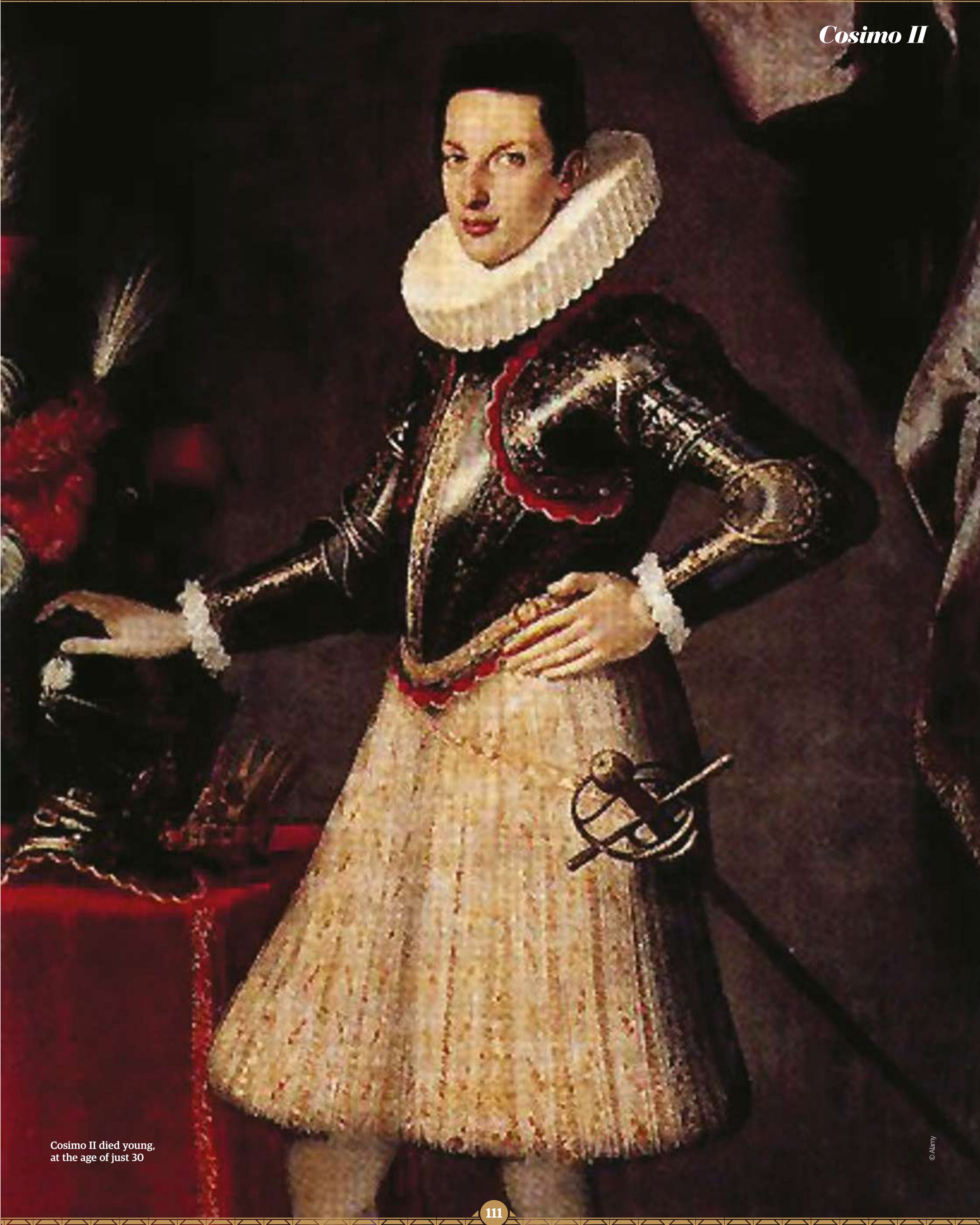
There were fireworks, too, in 1608 when Cosimo married Maria Maddalena, who was the sister of Emperor Ferdinand II. Cosimo's father, who loved spectacle, was determined to mark this prestigious marriage with a magnificent display on the River Arno. Huge grandstands were erected for the spectators to watch as Jason and the Argonauts sailed in front of them, skirting round an artificial island, a fire-spitting hydra and other enormous water creatures as they captured the Golden Fleece to present to Cosimo's bride. The marriage itself, too, would prove successful. The couple's first child - a daughter - was born a year after the wedding. She was followed by a further seven children, including Cosimo's heir, Ferdinando.

Cosimo was nearly 19 when his father died, leaving him in control of the grand duchy. His father had left Tuscany prosperous, while the state also punched above its weight on the international stage - most notably in the marriage in 1600 of Cosimo's cousin, Marie, to King Henry IV of France. The new grand duke was a friendly, inoffensive young man, interested both in hunting and in cultural pursuits. He was, however, already suffering from the early stages of tuberculosis, a disease that would ultimately kill him. Both due to his ill health and a lack of interest in the business of ruling, he relied heavily upon his mother to run his duchy.

Although Cosimo had little interest in government, his close connections with the ruling powers of Europe often saw him drawn into conflicts. The assassination of Henry IV of France in 1610 saw his widow, Marie de' Medici, named as regent of France, although by 1617 she was estranged from her son, Louis XIII. Cosimo found himself torn between support for his cousin, Marie, and for her son. He continued to secretly pay Marie an allowance that his father had promised her, in spite of Louis' opposition. Cosimo was also brought into the destructive Thirty Years' War, which erupted in 1618, thanks to his relationship with his brother-in-law, Emperor Ferdinand II. Cosimo, reluctantly, and in defiance of the Pope, sent funds to raise troops in Vienna.

Even relations with the Vatican were troubled, thanks to the death of a Medici pope, Leo XI, in 1605, who had survived his election by less than a month. This left the Medici family without a representative at the papal court until 1615, when Cosimo's brother was created a cardinal. Cosimo also came into conflict with Rome when the pope refused to consent to the betrothal of his sister, Catherine, to the Protestant Henry, Prince of Wales, in 1612. Although Cosimo argued that the marriage had the potential for returning England to the Catholic Church, Pope Paul V remained intransient. In any event, the proposed bridegroom died later that same year.

Like his Medici forebears, Cosimo was interested in building work and the glorification of his dynasty. He renovated and extended the magnificent Palazzo Pitti, which was his favourite residence and lay on the south side of the Arno. Its façade was significantly extended in Cosimo's time, while he named the palace as the grand duke's official residence for the first time. He also promoted the arts, with the Accademia della Crusca of Florence publishing the first edition of their dictionary in the Tuscan language in 1612. At the same time, Cosimo imported several artworks from



Cosimo II died young, at the age of just 30

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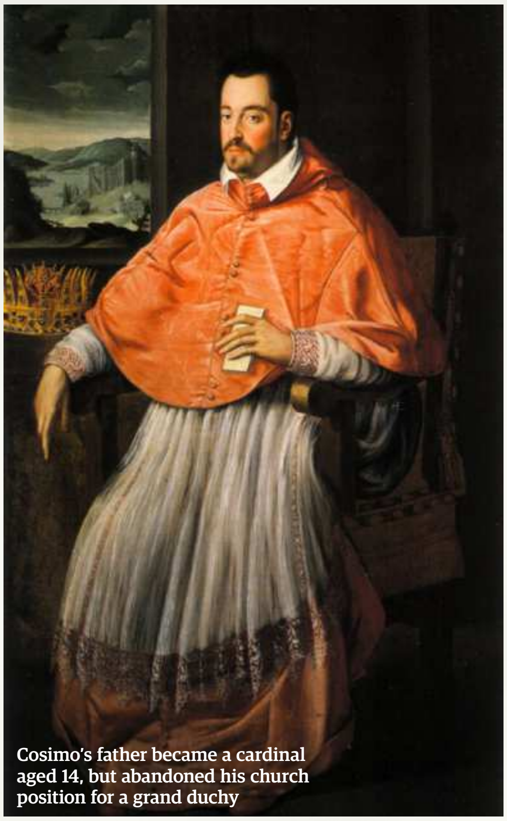


Cosimo's father became a cardinal aged 14, but abandoned his church position for a grand duchy

across Europe and employed his own court painter, Justus Sustermans. He and his family sat regularly for the painter.

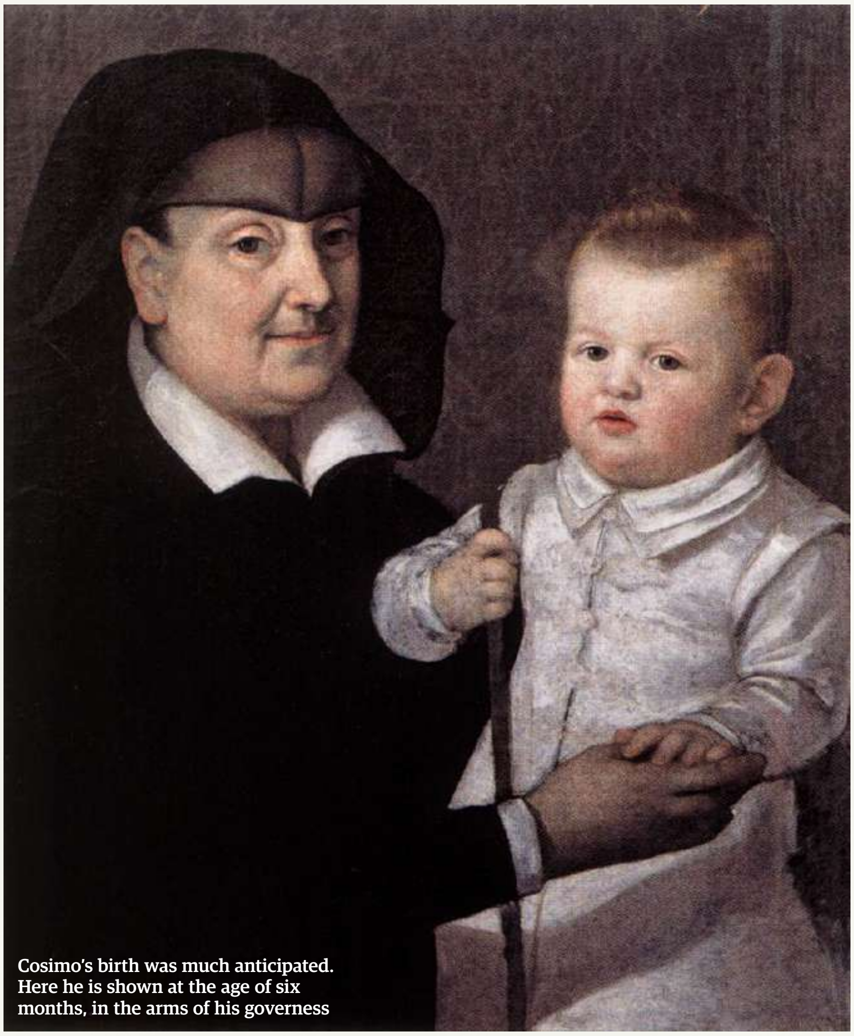
Cosimo spent considerable sums on improving the port of Livorno, which was important to the grand duchy's economy. As well as extending the harbour walls, he encouraged immigration there, allowing 3,000 Muslims who had been expelled from Spain to settle there in 1611. The majority were, however, later deported to Africa after they came into conflict with the local inhabitants. Cosimo also supported the efforts of the Knights of Saint Stephen in their defence against the Turks in the Mediterranean.

It was science that particularly excited the grand duke's interest. Soon after his accession, he appointed the famous scientist Galileo Galilei as Tuscany's philosopher and mathematician-in-chief. Although Galileo had originally entered the University of Pisa to study medicine, he soon changed his focus to mathematics and physics. Galileo had previously been Cosimo's tutor and the duke knew him well, greatly admiring Galileo's scientific innovations.

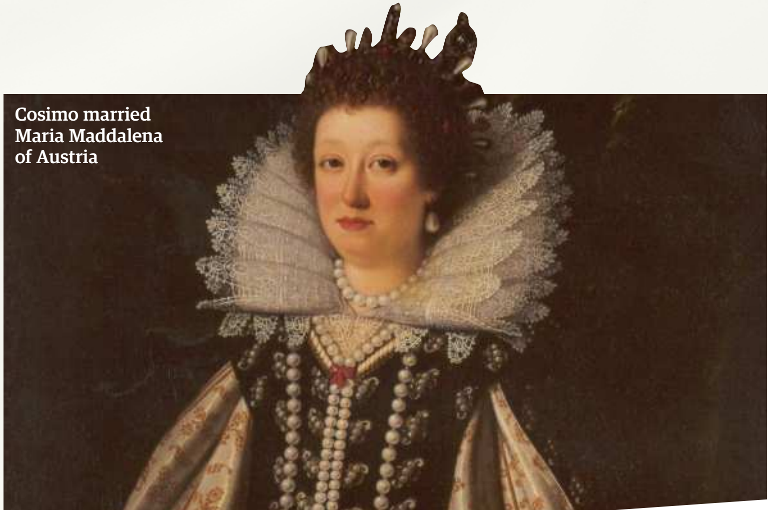
Galileo is now remembered for his work on astronomy, which was triggered by the invention of the telescope by Dutch spectacle makers in 1608. When Galileo heard of this fascinating new invention, he acquired his own examples, and was able to develop his own version. The telescope made it possible to closely study the heavens for the first time, with Galileo almost immediately making important scientific discoveries, including discovering four moons of Jupiter, which he named after his Medici patron, and identifying that the planet Venus had phases like the Moon. He would later also identify sunspots, which refuted ancient ideas that the Sun was perfect.

Cosimo's patronage was of significant importance to Galileo, since the grand duke was able to instruct his ambassadors in the courts of Europe to send details of new scientific discoveries directly back to the scientist. The grand duke also hosted scientific debates in Florence and proved an ardent supporter of his former tutor's theories. He was an enthusiastic disciple of the scientist, purchasing the villa of Poggio Imperiale near Arcetri, where he set up a telescope that had been presented to him by Galileo.

Cosimo was able to offer Galileo very powerful protection. Galileo's observations of the sky had led him to the view that the universe was heliocentric, with the Sun at its centre, just as Nicolaus Copernicus had proposed in 1543. This was highly controversial, since Orthodox Church teaching held that the Earth was at the centre of the universe,

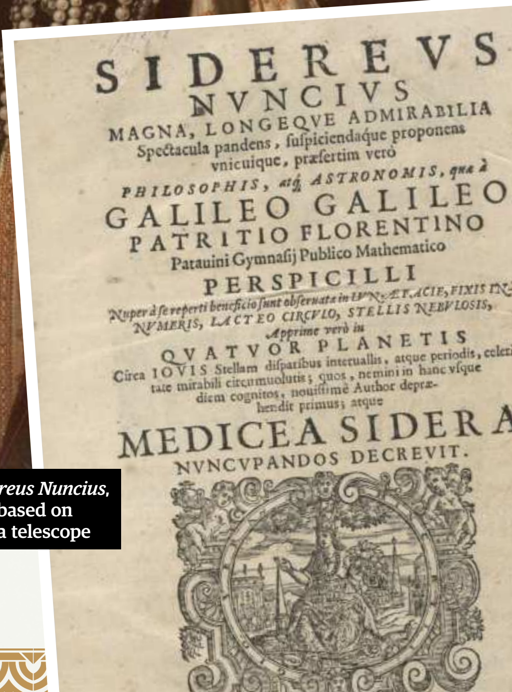


Cosimo's birth was much anticipated. Here he is shown at the age of six months, in the arms of his governess

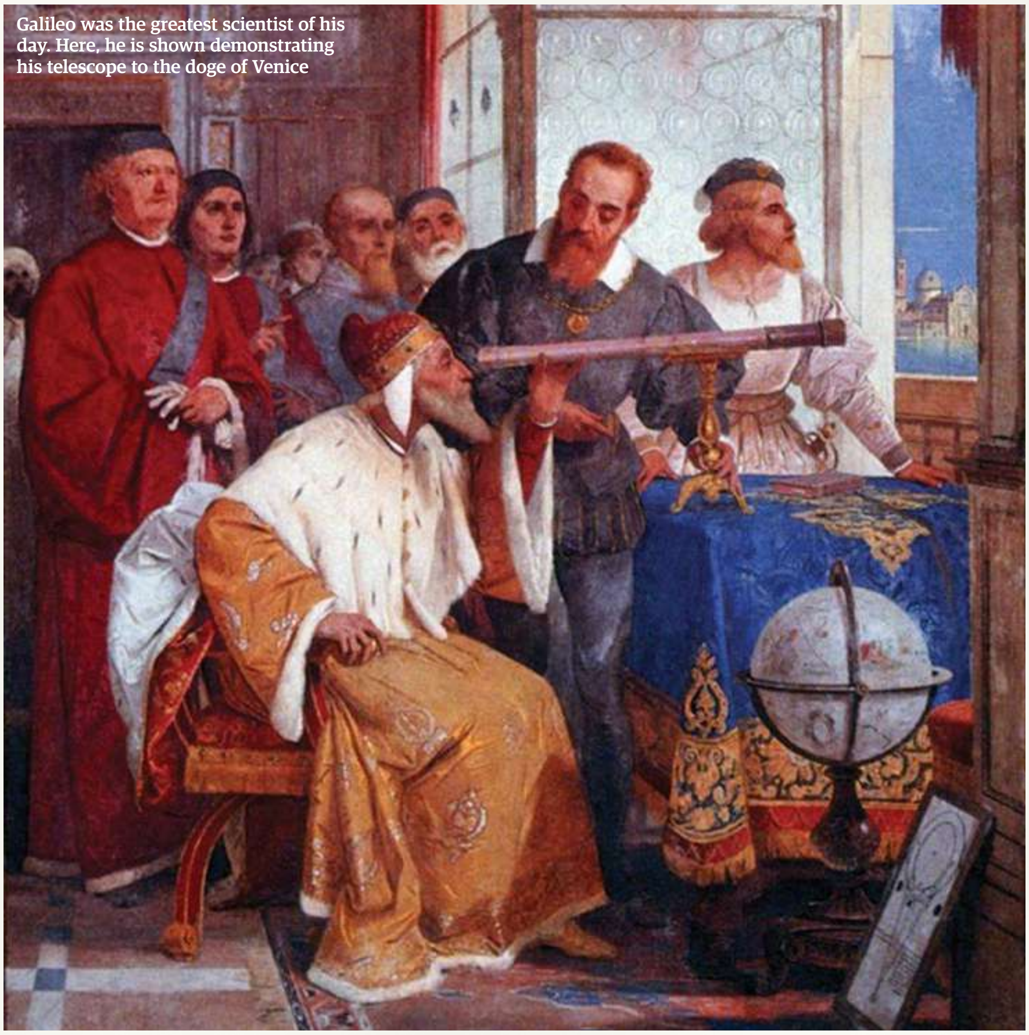


Cosimo married Maria Maddalena of Austria

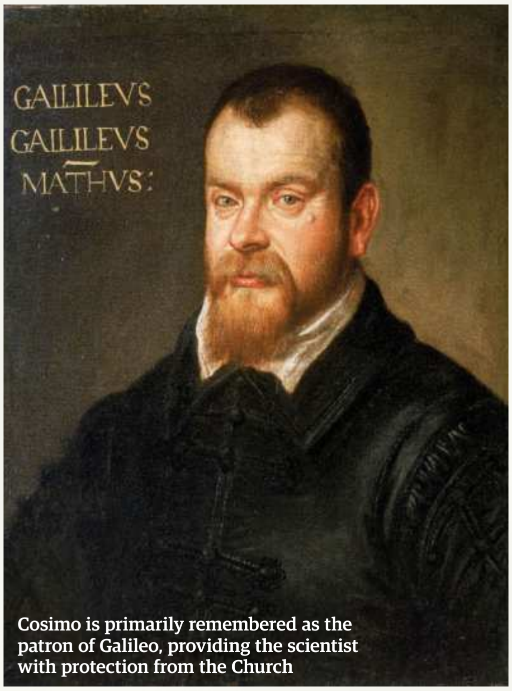
Right: Galileo's treatise, *Sidereus Nuncius*, was the first scientific work based on observations made through a telescope



SIDEREVS
NVNCIVS
MAGNA, LONGEQVE ADMIRABILIA
Spectacula pandens, ſuſpiciendaque proponens
vnicuique, præſertim verò
PHILOSOPHIS, atq; ASTRONOMIS, quæ à
GALILEO GALILEO
PATRITIO FLORENTINO
Patauini Gymnaſij Publico Mathematico
PERSPICILLI
Nuper à ſe reperti beneficio ſunt obſeruatæ in LVNÆ FACIE, FIXIS IN-
NVMERIS, LACTEO CIRCVLO, STELLIS NEBVLOSIS,
Apprime verò in
QVATVOR PLANETIS
Circa IOVIS Stellam diſparibus interuallis, atque periodis, celeri-
tate mirabili circumuolutis; quos, nemini in hanc vſque
diem cognitos, nouiſſimè Author depræ-
hendit primus; atque
MEDICEA SIDERA
NVNCVPANDOS DECREVIT.



Galileo was the greatest scientist of his day. Here, he is shown demonstrating his telescope to the doge of Venice



Cosimo is primarily remembered as the patron of Galileo, providing the scientist with protection from the Church

with Heaven above. Religion was at the very heart of 17th-century Italian society, making Galileo's theories potentially very contentious, since they were considered to directly contradict the Church's Holy Scriptures.

By 1613, this heliocentric debate was raging in Florence, with Galileo's views debated within Cosimo's own household. Although Cosimo's mother, the deeply religious Christine of Lorraine, admitted to one of Galileo's pupils that she found his views impossible to reconcile with her faith, both Cosimo and his wife were utterly convinced. Galileo, who tried personally to persuade Christine, published their correspondence as the 'Letter to the Grand Duchess' in 1615.

Galileo's theories placed him in considerable danger, with Pope Paul V condemning them as heretical and ordering him to refrain from teaching them. Years later, the scientist would be tried by the Inquisition in Rome for his theories, spending the last decade of his life under house arrest.

Cosimo's protection had long since ended by the time of Galileo's death in 1642. His health, which had never been good, continued to worsen as his reign progressed. By his late twenties, he was spending much of his time in bed and, although he prayed for a cure, none was forthcoming. Cosimo II died of tuberculosis on 28 February 1621, aged only 30. In commemoration, his brother, Cardinal Carlo de' Medici, commissioned a series of frescoes, the last of which showed his brother alongside several allegorical figures, including music, poetry and sculpture. It was a fitting tribute to his brother that the final figure, that of astronomy, was holding Galileo's telescope up to the sky.

Cosimo II lived a brief life, making little impact on the politics of his grand duchy or on the international stage. It is for his interest in science and the patronage that he offered that he is now chiefly remembered.

> "GALILEO HAD BEEN COSIMO'S TUTOR AND THE DUKE KNEW HIM WELL"

FOUR MEDICIAN STARS

Cosimo's patronage of Galileo led to the discovery of four Medician stars, orbiting the planet Jupiter

Cosimo II is remembered primarily for his patronage of Galileo Galilei, who was one of the most important scientists ever to live.

Galileo, who was a descendant of an impoverished Florentine noble family, was a controversial figure due to his assertion of a heliocentric universe rather than the prevailing orthodoxy of a universe with the Earth at its heart. Cosimo invited Galileo to Florence, offering him protection to allow him to continue his experiments safe from the persecution of the Church.

In 1610, Galileo published a book called *Sidereus Nuncius* (*The Starry Messenger*), which revealed to the world that he had discovered four moons in orbit around Jupiter - the first satellites, other than Earth's moon, to be identified. These moons, which are the largest of Jupiter's many satellites, are now known as Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Galileo, however, originally wanted to call them 'Cosimo's Stars', after his patron, before changing the name to the 'Medician Stars' to reference Cosimo, his three younger brothers, and their dynasty.

The identification of these Medician stars, which were the first objects in the Solar System that could be identified with certainty not to rotate around the Earth, was of major scientific importance at the time. Cosimo would protect and promote Galileo for the rest of his life, with the grand duke's son granting the scientist burial in the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence after his death in 1642, in spite of considerable Church opposition.

COSIMO III: DOWNFALL OF A DYNASTY

Pious and pompous in equal measure, Cosimo III turned the Medici into the poor relations of Europe and put the family's power in peril

Words **June Woolerton**

As Cosimo III fell ill for the final time, the Archbishop of Pisa came to minister to him. He soon declared the Grand Duke of Tuscany needed "little assistance to die well" as he had spent his life in religious observation, preparing for that moment. Cosimo had been devoted to the Catholic Church since childhood, but his grasp of secular matters was less impressive. His reign was the longest of any Medici, but he left the dynasty's grasp on power in a perilous state.

His religious devotion began in the cradle under the influence of his mother, Vittoria della Rovere. Cosimo was born on 14 August 1642 at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, and was given the same name as an older brother who had died neonatally. Shortly after Cosimo's birth, his mother found her husband, Ferdinando II, in bed with a young page, and the pair became estranged.

Vittoria doted on her son, who received the religious education she wanted rather than the scientific guidance chosen by his father. Cosimo's parents briefly reconciled in 1659 and had a second son, Francesco Maria, in 1660, but by the time he welcomed his younger brother, Cosimo was noted for his dour and almost depressed nature. He was obsessed with religious observance, fanatically following the strictest rules of the Church and by the time he turned 18, he spent much of his time with priests.

But as heir to the grand duke of Tuscany, a new duty awaited him. Ferdinando pressed on with a dynastic marriage for Cosimo to a cousin of King Louis XIV of France, Marguerite Louise d'Orléans. It was a prestigious match for the Medici, but the bride made no secret of her disdain for the dynasty she considered beneath herself.

Their proxy wedding in Paris in April 1661 was followed by Marguerite Louise's glittering entry into Florence in June, but she showed contempt for her new family while almost immediately raiding their jewellery collections. Cosimo, meanwhile, quickly angered his wife by continuing to obey his mother's every word.

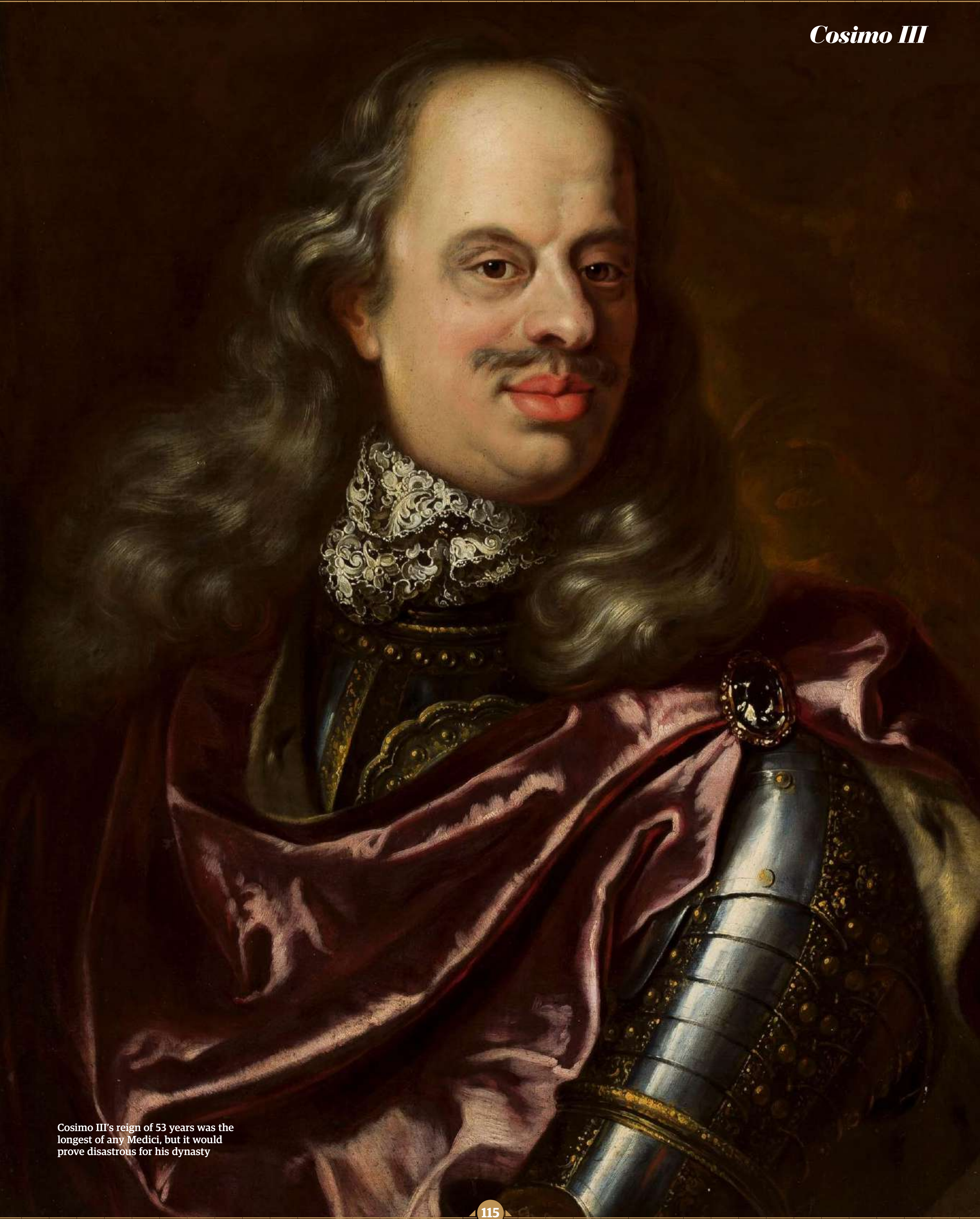
The ill-suited couple provided an heir for the Medici in 1663 with the birth of their first son, Ferdinando, but Marguerite Louise took that as an opportunity to reject her husband completely. Her father-in-law ended up imprisoning her in the Palazzo Pitti, then the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano until she agreed to return to Cosimo. But following the birth of their daughter, Anna Maria Luisa, in 1667, Marguerite Louise once more turned her back on marriage.

Cosimo headed off on a series of visits around Europe and on his return in 1670, his wife once more resumed their relationship. Just months later, Ferdinando's death turned them into grand duke and duchess of Tuscany, but their honeymoon period would be shortlived.

Cosimo's mother, Vittoria, was given a leading role in the new government of her son and came to dominate the education of her grandchildren. Marguerite Louise gave birth to another son, Gian Gastone, in 1671, and soon afterwards engineered a permanent departure from her husband's side. Cosimo had her confined to Poggio where she was watched constantly, before he agreed to a separation that saw his wife depart for a convent in France with 80,000 livres in her pockets.

His attitude towards Marguerite Louise summed up his actions as a ruling prince. His main concerns were religion, the moral salvation of others and spending money. Under Vittoria's influence, he continued to favour the Jesuits, who were allowed to set up colleges across Tuscany. His religious beliefs also saw Cosimo ban some of the scientific teachings introduced by his father.

Cosimo was seen to go to church up to six times a day and as his reign progressed, he expected his subjects to follow similar strict



Cosimo III's reign of 53 years was the longest of any Medici, but it would prove disastrous for his dynasty

COSIMO'S SAD GRAND TOUR

Cosimo's father, Ferdinando, ordered him to travel abroad when his marriage ran into trouble

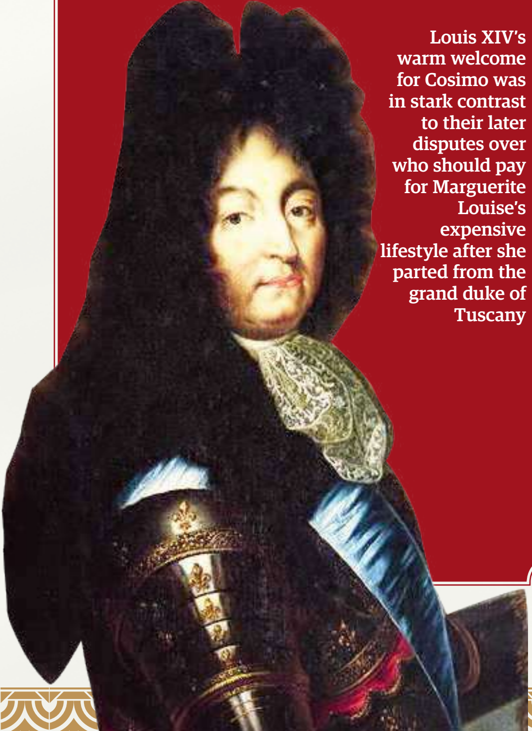
When Cosimo's wife rejected him soon after the birth of their first child, his father took drastic action. He sent his taciturn son on an extended holiday in northern Italy, where Cosimo visited as many churches and shrines as he could. Meanwhile, his wife Marguerite Louise was kept under house arrest at Poggio a Caiano and by 1665, the couple were reconciled.

But following the arrival of their second child in 1667, Marguerite Louise again abandoned her husband and he was once again sent away by his father. But this time, Ferdinando decided to broaden Cosimo's horizons further. His itinerary this time took him to Northern Europe, with stops in Brussels, Amsterdam and Vienna, but absence made the young princess's heart no fonder, and when she refused to return to Cosimo, he was told to take another holiday despite the growing cost to his financially strapped father.

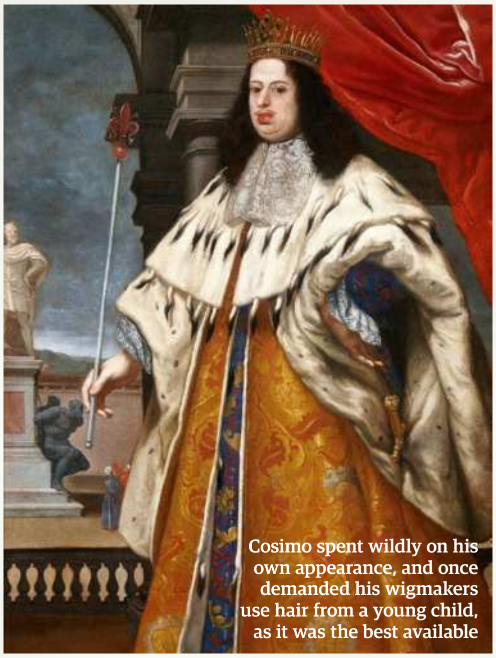
Spain and Portugal were on his must-see list this time round and once they had been toured, Cosimo headed to England, where he spent time in London and Cambridge. The summer of 1669 took him to Rotterdam before the visit that would be the high point of his tours for Cosimo: a stop in Paris.

He was welcomed with great honour by Marguerite Louise's uncle, King Louis XIV, and Cosimo soon settled into the opulent surroundings of Versailles, which appealed to his taste for the finer things in life.

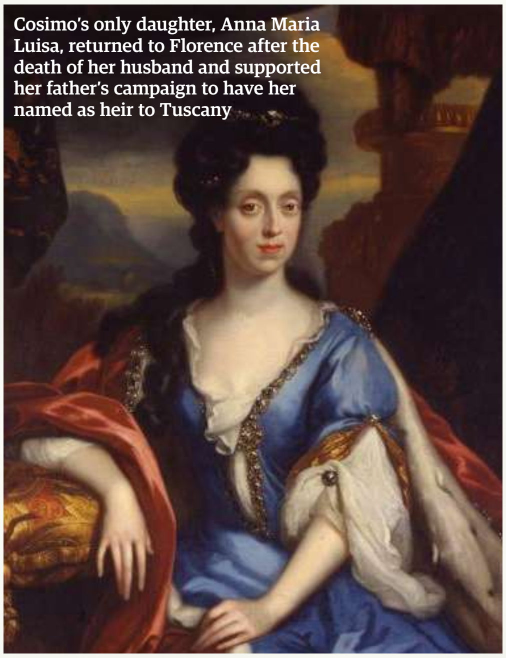
He returned to Florence to find his wife once more willing to take up their marriage and in 1771, they had a third child. The son born as a result of these European wanderings, Gian Gastone, would become the last Medici ruler.



Louis XIV's warm welcome for Cosimo was in stark contrast to their later disputes over who should pay for Marguerite Louise's expensive lifestyle after she parted from the grand duke of Tuscany



Cosimo spent wildly on his own appearance, and once demanded his wigmakers use hair from a young child, as it was the best available



Cosimo's only daughter, Anna Maria Luisa, returned to Florence after the death of her husband and supported her father's campaign to have her named as heir to Tuscany

religious observances, implementing a rule that forced everyone living in Florence to kneel down every Friday when the bell of the Duomo rang in remembrance of Christ's crucifixion. He banned the eating of eggs and dairy as well as meat during Lent and put a stop to parties and theatre performances on a Saturday. He even dictated what people could wear in his attempts to protect the morals of his subjects. There were also harsh rules preventing contact between Jewish and Christian people, while prostitutes became a particular focus of his moral crusade.

Cosimo brought in punitive fines for those seen to transgress his codes, but by then he was in desperate need of the money. The Medici had long since lost their golden touch and he had inherited a much depleted exchequer. But Cosimo also liked to spend and was particularly keen to show himself to be on a par with other European powers. He wore fine clothes and wigs, ate copiously, and did everything he could to make sure his court was as glittering as any other in Europe. The only budget he did trim during his reign was the traditional Medici patronage of the arts, which held little interest for him.

His money-making ways alienated him further from his subjects, who were unimpressed with his strict regime. Cosimo imposed all kinds of taxes on them - at one point even raising money on wigs - while there were so many customs posts across Tuscany that business began to decline rapidly. So, too, did the population.

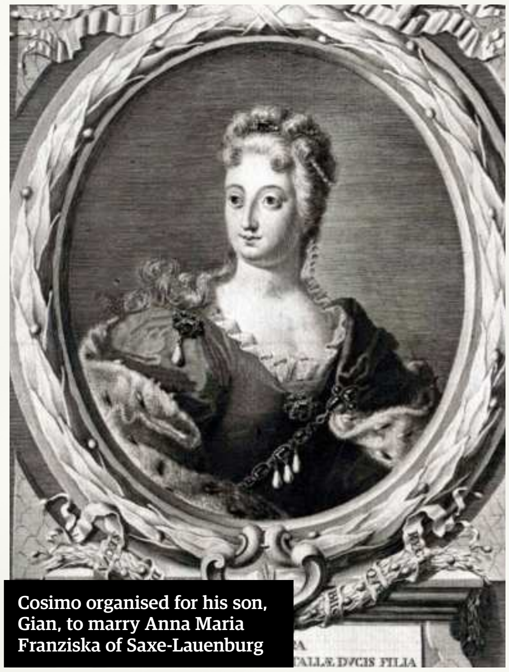
However, despite his grand duchy including streets where pavements were cracked with grass and weeds, Cosimo was determined to be seen as a major royal player in Europe. In 1690, he flew into a rage when he discovered that the duke of Savoy had been given the title of 'Royal Highness' by Emperor Leopold I. After protracted negotiations, Leopold agreed to Cosimo's demands to be made an HRH after the grand duke consented to a marriage between his daughter, Anna Maria Luisa, and the emperor's brother-in-law. But soon after the wedding, Cosimo discovered that his new title also came with an annual bill of 500,000 scudi, which he paid for with yet more taxes.

Foreign relations would prove difficult for Cosimo, whose idea of his own importance never matched the opinion others had of Tuscany. When the emperor and the French king went to war over who would succeed to the vacant Spanish throne, Cosimo tried to remain neutral. But Louis XIV of France persuaded Cosimo's brother, now Cardinal Francesco Maria, to back the French cause and soon the grand duke had followed suit, angering the emperor. However, when the French candidate, Philip V, arrived in Livorno, he refused to get off his ship to meet Cosimo, who was sent scurrying on board to beg for an audience.

Later, as the emperor took the upper hand in the war, Cosimo found himself threatened with invasion and ended up paying 600,000 ducats to the emperor to keep his grand duchy safe. He also had to provide winter quarters for a huge swathe of the victorious imperial army, further depleting his already shaky treasury.

His money worries were made worse by his two sons who, like both their parents, had an ability to spend wildly. Ferdinando, like a true Medici, was a prolific patron of the arts but also became known

> "COSIMO HAD INHERITED A MUCH DEPLETED EXCHEQUER"



Cosimo organised for his son, Gian, to marry Anna Maria Franziska of Saxe-Lauenburg

for his extravagant lifestyle. Gian Gastone showed a fondness for drink and after a disastrous marriage arranged by his sister, he spent increasing amounts of time and money carousing his way around Europe. Neither of the brothers would listen to the appeals of their father to either cut their bills or live more morally.

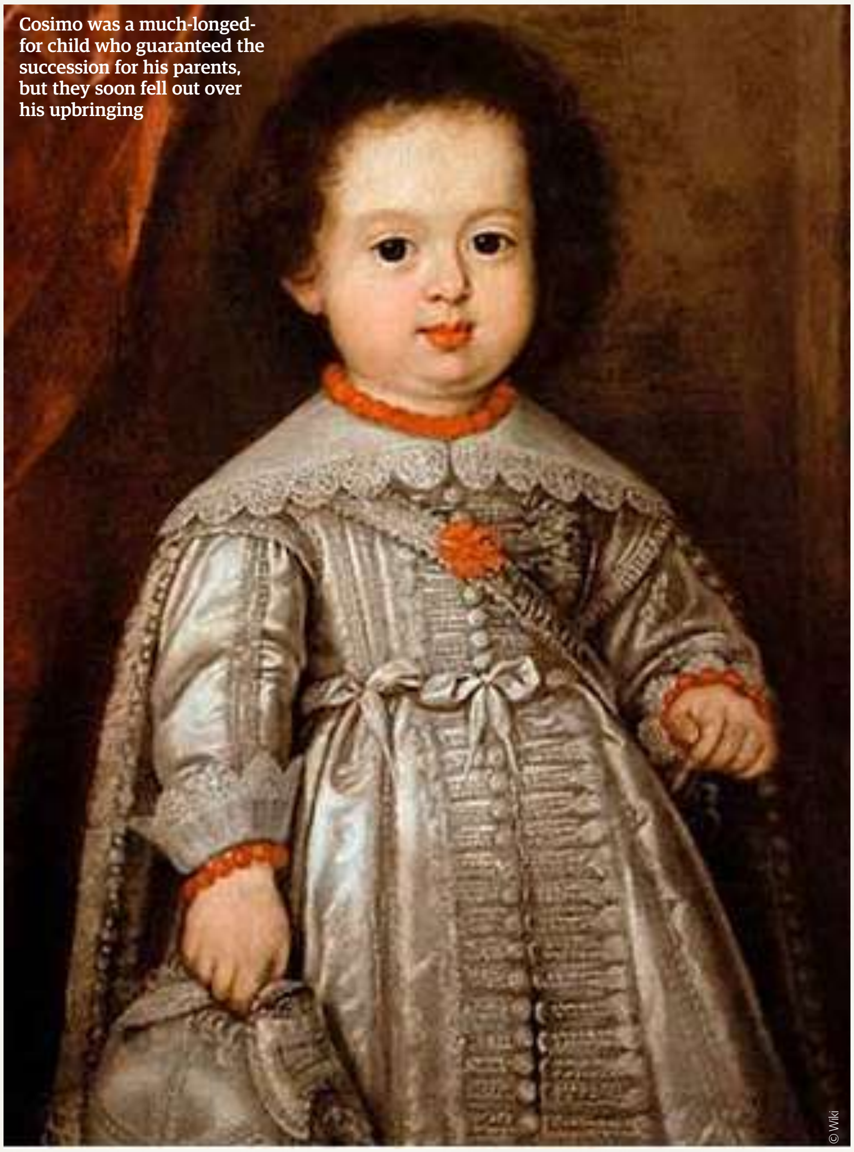
Furthermore, neither had children. Ferdinando's marriage to Violante of Bavaria had been very publicly barren, with Cosimo wasting more money on raising funds for a fertility column to be built in Florence, much to the ridicule of his subjects. Gian Gastone and his bride, Anna Maria Franziska of Saxe-Lauenburg, spent so little time together that Cosimo soon gave up any hope of them securing his wobbling dynasty. Ferdinando's death in 1713 brought the matter to crisis point.

Despite his devotion to religion, in his last years Cosimo showed that his devotion to the Medici was stronger. He persuaded his brother, Francesco Maria, to give up his cardinal's hat to marry a young heiress in the hope of producing an heir for the grand duchy but that plan, too, failed.

Finally, Cosimo settled on the idea of his daughter, Anna Maria Luisa, inheriting his title. She had no children, either, but the two of them agreed that on her death, Tuscany would once more become a republic. However, the emperor was having none of it. Cosimo saw the future of his grand duchy become the subject of debates to which he was no longer integral.

On 22 September 1723, Cosimo began shaking uncontrollably at dinner and didn't stop for two hours. He ordered that prayers be said for him across Tuscany. However, he knew that his health was rapidly deteriorating and he died on 31 October that year. He was buried in the Prince's Chapel at the San Lorenzo Church, next to a long line of Medici rulers.

Cosimo III's inheritance had included the name most closely associated with his famous dynasty, but in the end he had little in common with those who had gone before. While the first Cosimo, the Elder, had given the Medici dominance of Florence, the last Cosimo's reign had guaranteed the dynasty's demise.



Cosimo was a much-longed-for child who guaranteed the succession for his parents, but they soon fell out over his upbringing

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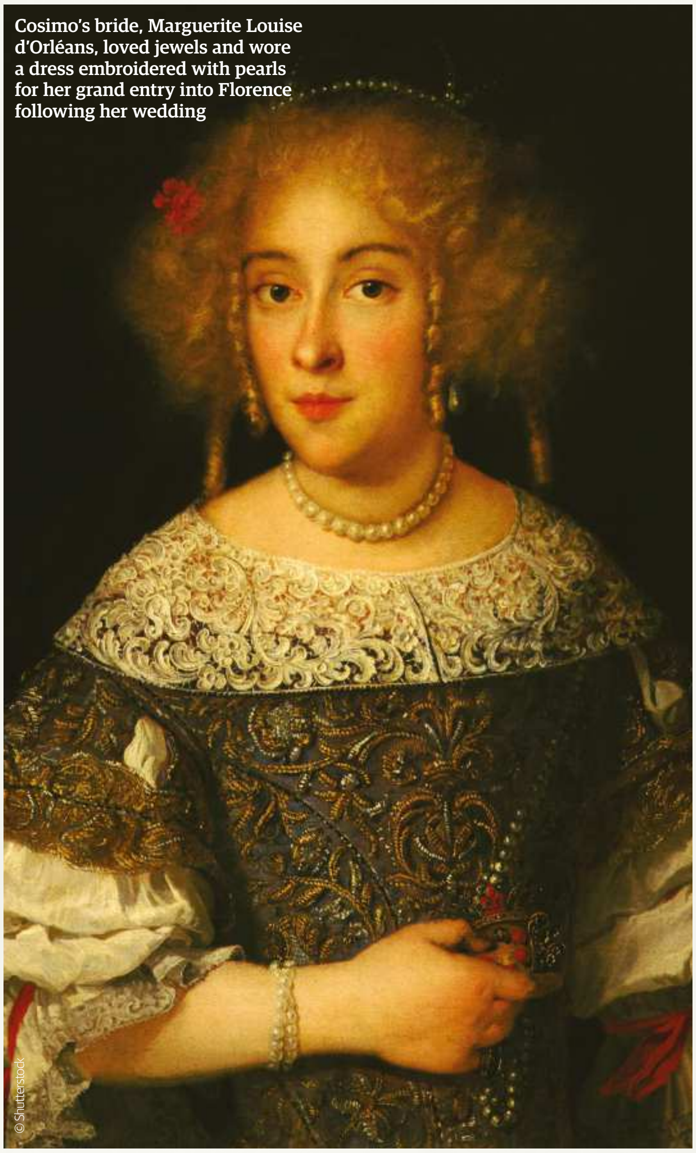

Cosimo's bride, Marguerite Louise d'Orléans, loved jewels and wore a dress embroidered with pearls for her grand entry into Florence following her wedding

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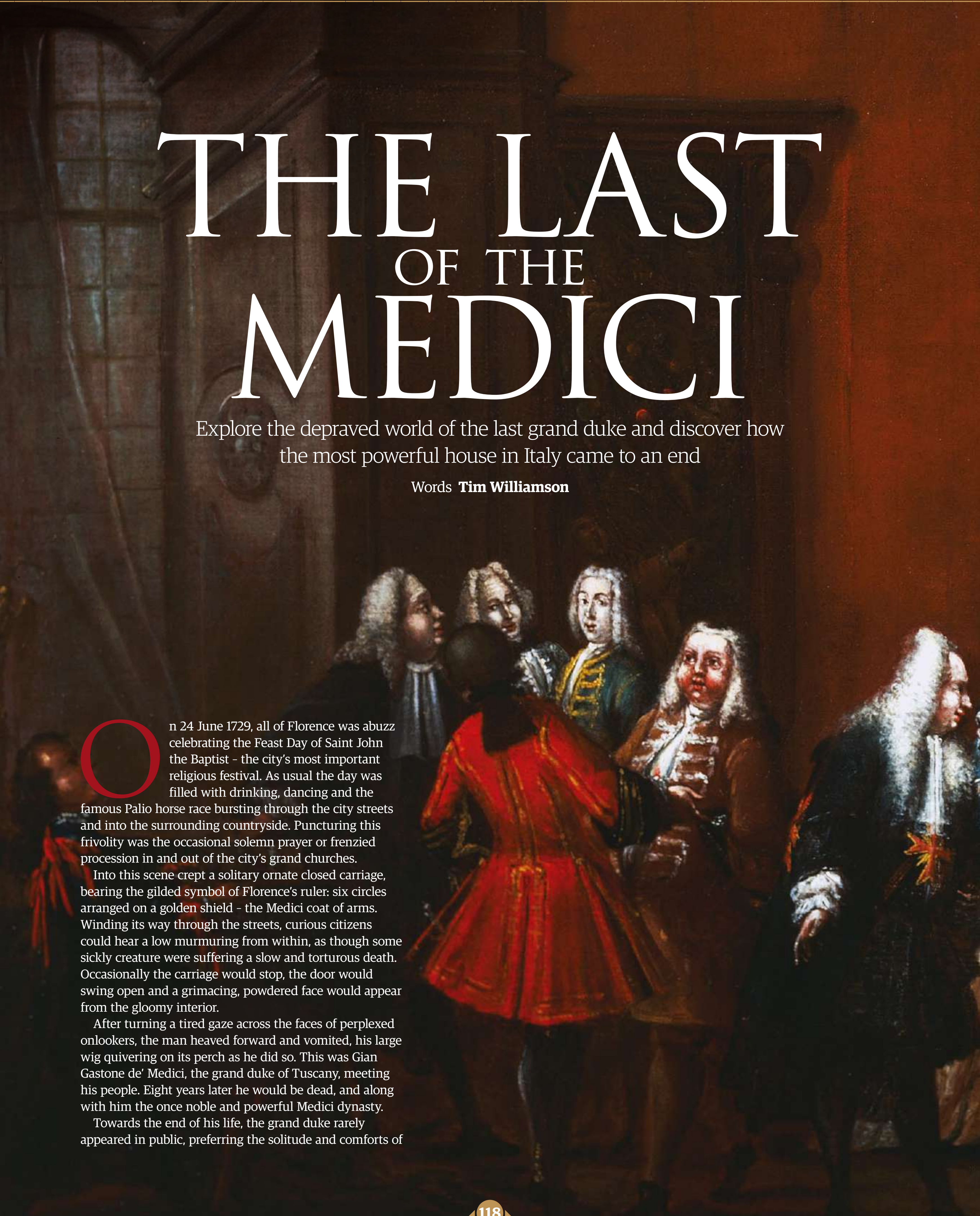


THE LAST OF THE MEDICI

Explore the depraved world of the last grand duke and discover how the most powerful house in Italy came to an end

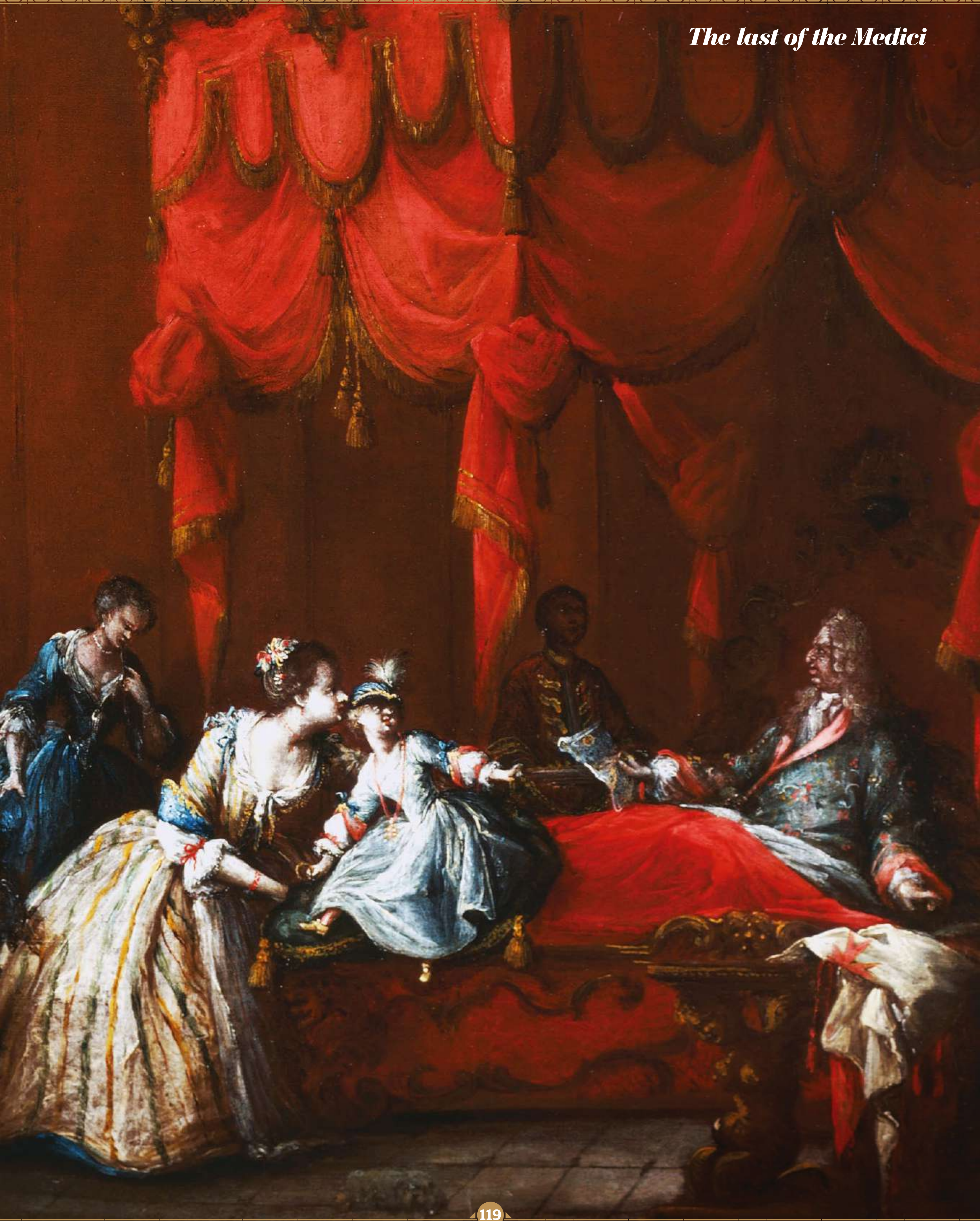
Words **Tim Williamson**

On 24 June 1729, all of Florence was abuzz celebrating the Feast Day of Saint John the Baptist – the city's most important religious festival. As usual the day was filled with drinking, dancing and the famous Palio horse race bursting through the city streets and into the surrounding countryside. Puncturing this frivolity was the occasional solemn prayer or frenzied procession in and out of the city's grand churches.

Into this scene crept a solitary ornate closed carriage, bearing the gilded symbol of Florence's ruler: six circles arranged on a golden shield – the Medici coat of arms. Winding its way through the streets, curious citizens could hear a low murmuring from within, as though some sickly creature were suffering a slow and torturous death. Occasionally the carriage would stop, the door would swing open and a grimacing, powdered face would appear from the gloomy interior.

After turning a tired gaze across the faces of perplexed onlookers, the man heaved forward and vomited, his large wig quivering on its perch as he did so. This was Gian Gastone de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, meeting his people. Eight years later he would be dead, and along with him the once noble and powerful Medici dynasty.

Towards the end of his life, the grand duke rarely appeared in public, preferring the solitude and comforts of



his magnificent residence, the Palazzo Pitti, than the burden of ruling Tuscany. When he did appear, as on the feast day that June, his sickly complexion and often-profane behaviour were shocking - his wretched condition reflecting the lamentable waning of the Medici family, as well as Florence's fortunes.

Although Gian Gastone was the last Medici grand duke, the dynasty had long been in decline from its former greatness. As rulers over the Renaissance's birthplace, the family had been among the greatest supporters of the genius artists and scholars the era produced, including Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. This was no exception with Gian Gastone's father and predecessor, Cosimo III, who continued the family tradition of collecting vast quantities of art, as well as patronising the city's talent, including the famous sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini.

However, Cosimo's rule over Tuscany was far from artful, and his tenure saw a large number of severe laws, taxes and fines enacted. Many other laws brought upon a harsher treatment of the Jewish population - working for or even sleeping with a Jew was punishable by a heavy fine or prison sentence. Prostitutes could even face a whipping in the street for having sex with a Jew, and this wasn't the only sanction they were forced to work around. Licences to solicit in the street came at a price of six crowns a year, while countless additional bribes were necessary to avoid harassment by the ominously named 'Office of Public Decency'. As well as raking in capital from prostitutes, Cosimo also sold off monopolies to the city traders, before selling bypasses to those monopolies at an even greater price.

Capital punishment was almost a daily spectacle in Cosimo's Florence, with more than 2,000 executions carried out in one year alone. Everything from sodomy to murder was punishable by beheading, with the latter followed up with the grisly quartering of the criminal's body for good measure. Even the innocent act of courtship was criminalised by Cosimo, with men forbidden to "dally at doors and windows by night" - those caught in coitus with a woman they shouldn't be cavorting with were subjected to torture sessions in the state dungeons.

However, Cosimo's attempt to tie a strong moralistic noose around the necks of Florence's fornicators, while withdrawing extra dividends for the state, was ultimately a failure, and this was embodied in none other than his eldest son and heir, Ferdinando. The grand prince was not only highly promiscuous, but also had a preference for pretty young men, as well as many talented singers and musicians of both sexes. He lavished gifts upon his lovers, and like all good Medicis that had come before him, he was a highly generous patron, himself a talented musician and composer. From a young age he was able to play any piece of music presented to him from sight, to near perfection, and much of his time was spent organising recitals and operas, always with the utmost style and at a triple-A budget.

The people of Florence mourned Gian's passing as he helped tackle corrupt churchmen in government and lowered taxes

"THE PRINCE GAMBLED AWAY FORTUNES DURING THE TRIP, AND WHAT HE WASN'T SPENDING ON CARDS HE WAS DRINKING AWAY IN SEEDY BARS"

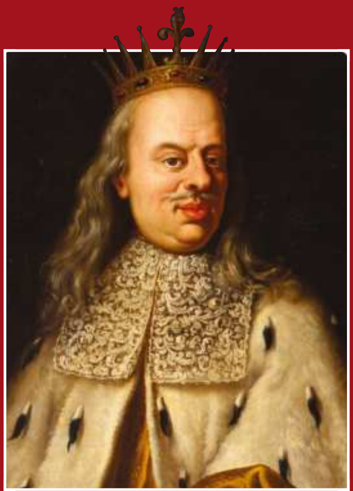
What did not grip the grand prince, or even mildly interest him, were the matters of state - nor producing a Medici heir to rule that state. In 1696, he returned from a festival in Venice with a new young noble mistress, and venereal disease, both to the consternation of his wife, Violante. Long before his eldest son's premature death in 1713, Cosimo had already determined he would have to look elsewhere to secure the Medici line.

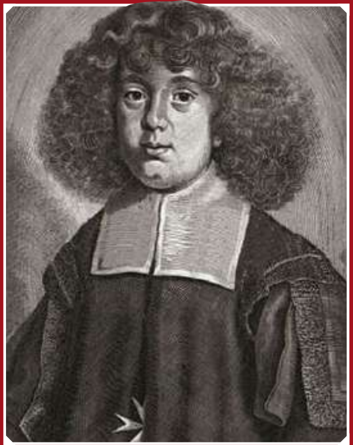
Unfortunately, Cosimo's remaining son seemed even less likely to provide an heir than the dead Ferdinando. Not only was Gian Gastone not interested in women, he was actively repulsed by his wife, Anna Maria Franziska of Saxe-Lauenburg, and she by him. After being forced into the marriage on 2 July 1697, the couple had moved to Anna Maria's remote home in Bohemia, a small town called Reichstadt, where the young prince became utterly depressed and withdrawn. In later life he would wholly blame his sister, Anna Maria Luisa, Electress Palatine, who was a most enthusiastic instigator of the match.

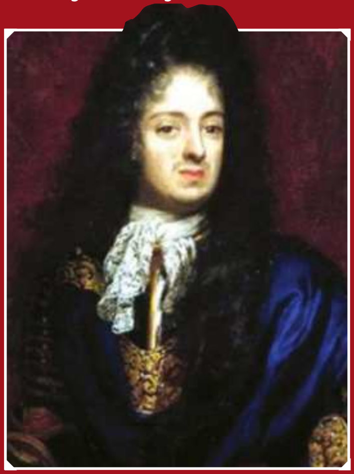
Wracked with melancholy, Gian Gastone begged his wife to be able to return to Florence, and upon

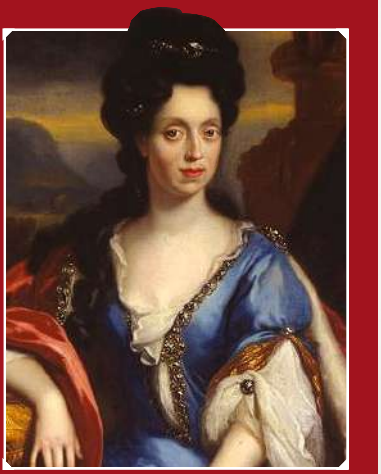
KEEPING UP WITH THE MEDICI

Introducing the saints, sinners and swines of Tuscany's once powerful dynasty









Cosimo III

THE PIOUS PATRIARCH

A stern zealot and authoritarian, Cosimo's reign was nowhere near as glorious or prosperous as either of his namesakes, and Florence rapidly declined as a city of influence during his time. His estranged wife, Marguerite Louise d'Orléans, left Florence in 1672, allowing Cosimo to indulge in entertaining guests, his substantial art collection and later in life his religion. In 1700, he travelled to Rome to add curious Catholic relics – the body parts of saints, for instance – to his collection of portraits, bronzes and sculptures. On his death, he left the state bankrupt.

Francesco Maria

THE PRANKSTER

When Cosimo foresaw neither of his two sons being capable of continuing the Medici line, he turned to his younger brother, the cardinal Francesco Maria, who was also governor of Siena. However, as with many of his relations, this Medici was neither particularly pious nor statesmanlike. A great hedonist, he spent much of his time feasting, drinking and, above all, gambling. He was also a notorious prankster, and on one occasion served a lavish meal to distinguished guests, before tricking them into thinking they had dined on roast donkey.

Grand Prince Ferdinando

THE PLAYBOY PIANIST

The Medici heir apparent was a talented musician, a generous patron of the arts and a passionate lover – though his taste in this regard did not include his wife, Violante Beatrice of Bavaria. He befriended and supported Bartolomeo Cristofori, a Florentine harpsichord maker and inventor of the pianoforte, as well as numerous other great musicians. Having contracted syphilis from a noble Venetian lady during a festival, Ferdinando's health waned and he died childless in 1713.

Electress Palatine, Anna Maria Luisa

THE STERN SISTER

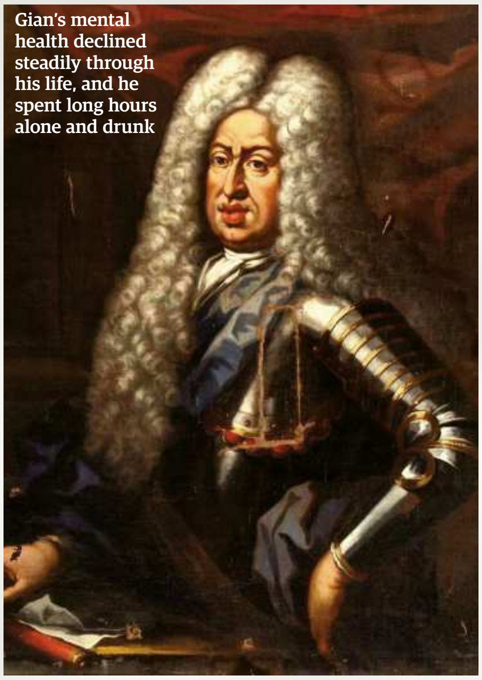
Anna was a haughty character, and had more in common with her austere father than with either of her brothers. Gian Gastone despised her for playing an instrumental part in his awful marriage, and she loathed his liberal policies and immoral living. She would be the last lineal descendant of the House of Medici, but laws prevented her accession, and she refused nominal regency. In 1737, she willed all the personal property of the Medici to the Tuscan state.

Palazzo Pitti served as the chief residence on the Medici from the 16th century onwards. Today it houses the largest museum complex in Florence

her refusal consigned himself to a mostly solitary, brooding life, with increasingly frequent bouts of debauchery. His chief accomplice in this was the charismatic, charming and handsome Giuliano Dami. A peasant by birth, Dami had nonetheless risen to favour with Gian Gastone, who had been taken with the young man's looks while living in Florence.

Accompanied by Dami, and an assortment of attendants, in 1699 Gian Gastone escaped from his remote Reichstadt prison and travelled to Prague. This escapade is best described in a memoir of Gastone's reign, kept at the Biblioteca Moreniana library in Florence and translated by historian Sir Harold Acton: "There were scores of fresh young students in Prague, smooth-chinned Bohemians and Germans, who were so impecunious that on certain days they wandered begging from door to door. In this wide preserve Giuliano could always hunt for amorous game and introduce some new and comely morsel to the Prince."

The memoir goes on to detail how the revellers indulged to excess, always at Gian Gastone's expense as well as at his encouragement. The prince gambled away fortunes during the trip, and what he wasn't spending on cards he was drinking


Gian's mental health declined steadily through his life, and he spent long hours alone and drunk

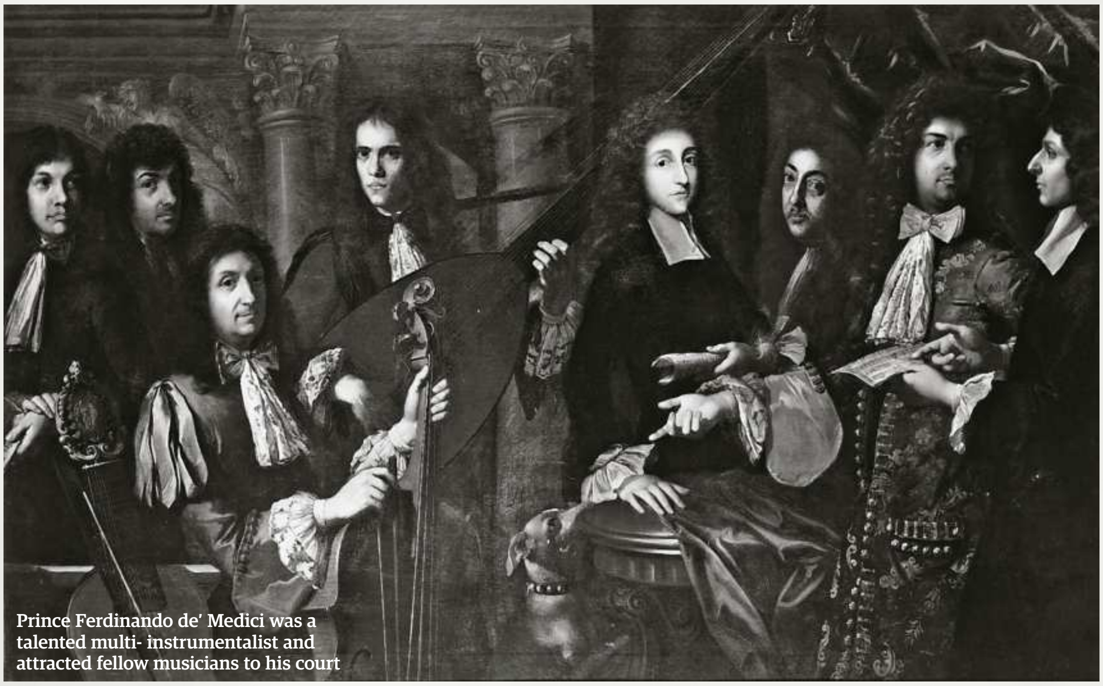
away in seedy bars. Often, it was said, "...he ran in peril of his life. Setting forth in disguise he would join the ribald company of wretches that lolled about half-drunk in low haunts and taverns of the town." Caught up in the chaotic melee of alcohol-infused brawls, Gian Gastone would, "...put up with blows, pistol shots and sword cuts."

Eventually, of course, the trip came to an end once the money ran out. Cosimo wrote to the prince, commanding him to return to his estranged wife in Reichstadt. His escapades in Prague had certainly revived Gian Gastone's spirit, though they had decayed his physical appearance and set in place a hedonistic pattern that would define the rest of his life. To quote Acton, after returning from the capital, Gian Gastone's "features began to settle into that monstrous mould of which we may see a likeness in the Uffizi Gallery."

On 31 October 1723, after a prolonged illness, Cosimo III died in the presence of his confessor. In the hours up until his end he had been attended by numerous clergy and the archbishop of Pisa, who all pronounced blessings to send his soul on its final journey. He had reigned for 53 years, the longest of any Medici grand duke, and now left behind him a state of near chaos.

With no clear line of succession beyond Gian Gastone and his sister Anna Maria Luisa, the great powers of Europe hungrily vied for position over the Tuscan duchy. But the Medici prince remained as uninterested in the affairs of state and inheritance as he had ever been. He did, however, repeal many of the harshest laws and taxes enforced by his predecessor, as well as a curious payment known as the 'Pension of the Creed', which offered cash incentives to Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity. Now in his 50s and with no impediment to check him, he set about living for his own desires.

"Throwing back wine like it were water, Gian Gastone would order the Ruspanti to tease, insult and even assault him"


Prince Ferdinando de' Medici was a talented multi- instrumentalist and attracted fellow musicians to his court

Gian Gastone's daily routine thereby became one dedicated to pleasure. Waking at around midday, he would receive official visitors while sat up in bed, at least those visitors who had filled Giuliano Dami's purse with enough crowns. Remaining in bed for the rest of the day, he would then take dinner at 5pm and supper at 2am. Between these hours was about the time he would be joined by the latest addition to the Tuscan court - the Ruspanti.

Named after the low-value coin - the ruspi - that was used to pay them for their service, the Ruspanti were a band of young men, as well as some women, recruited from Florence's streets by Dami to entertain the grand duke. One account describes them: "It mattered not from what gang of vagrant knaves and mongrols, unruly and unclean, provided they were graced with an alluring eye and the countenance of an Adonis."

Now the master of the Palazzo Pitti, and with no authority to stop him, Gian Gastone revived the excessive and lascivious habits that he had picked up during his time in Prague, with the help of the Ruspanti. Reclining in his bed, covered with snuff and throwing back wine like it were water, Gian Gastone would order the Ruspanti to tease, insult and even assault him - all for his own particular entertainment. The Ruspanti also performed sexual acts with one another, as well as with the grand duke, for his own pleasure and amusement. Grand dinners would also be held regularly, during which each of the Ruspanti guests were renamed after the great statesmen and clergy of Florence, and Gian

Gastone would address each of them as though they were nobility.

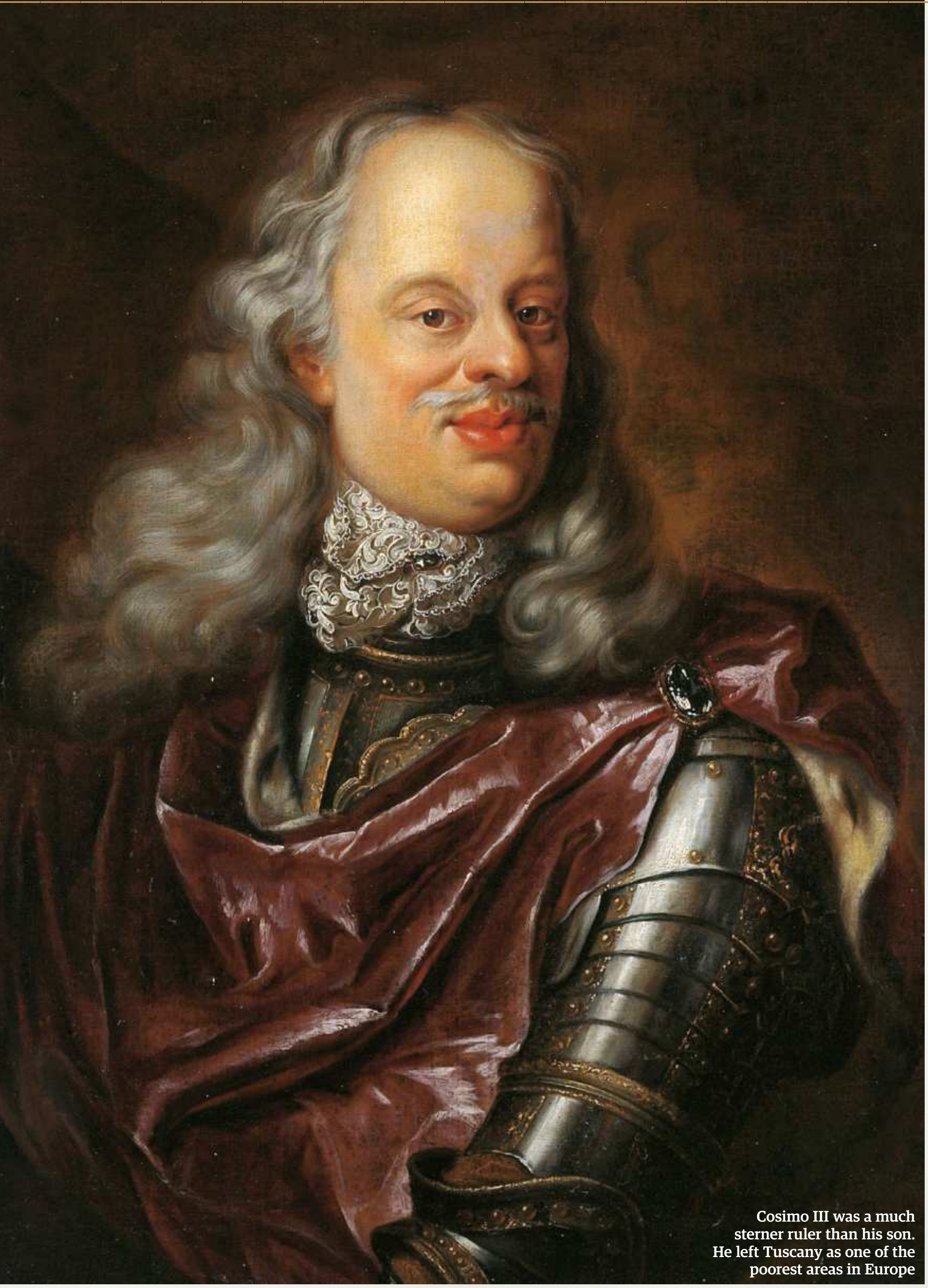
Gradually, the Ruspanti grew in number and the grand duke spent his time with practically no one else, all the while remaining in the confinement of his bedchamber. His sister-in-law, Violante, who was left with the daily running of the state in his absence, made efforts to force him back into the public eye, but these were to no avail. On one such occasion, she arranged a great banquet, inviting all the important aristocrats of the duchy and beyond to the Lappeggi Palace to meet with Gian Gastone, though this was to be a disaster.

Not long into the meal, Gian Gastone, "…got incapably drunk, swearing and belching as he ate his food, making occasional comments of indescribable lewdness." Swaying back and forth at the table, while gentlemen and ladies recoiled in horror and disgust, he then suddenly raised a napkin to his mouth and promptly vomited into it. Gazing carelessly around the stunned gathering and chuckling, the grand duke then, "…wiped his mouth with the tumbling curls of his wig," before continuing to dine as though nothing had occurred. The room was hastily vacated.

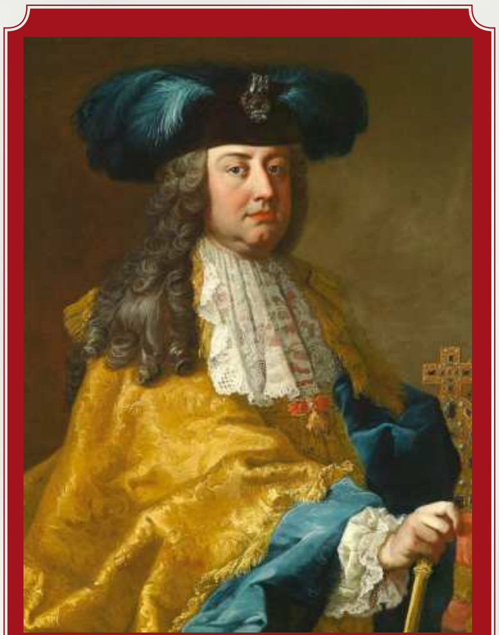
This humiliation was repeated on that Feast Day in 1729, which was also the grand duke's final appearance in public. After eventually falling into a drunken stupor among the festivities, his servants carried him back to the Palazzo Pitti, where he would largely remain for the rest of his life, with his Ruspanti for company.

By 1737, one noble foreign visitor noted that the Tuscan duke was, "…in a pitiable condition… He could not get out of bed; he had a long beard; his sheets were very dirty." The duke's bedchamber by this point was so filthy and odorous from his permanent occupancy that his servants filled it with fresh roses every day to mask the stench and save the senses of occasional visitors.

On 10 July that same year, Gian Gastone lay ill, dying, and after desperate pleas from his relatives, accepted a priest to hear his last confession in an attempt to redeem his soul. Greeting Prior Ippoito Rosselli, the local Florentine priest brought to him, the duke uttered: "You see, we all must die." Then, after some hours, the last of the Medici line expired as a deathbed repentant.



Cosimo III was a much sterner ruler than his son. He left Tuscany as one of the poorest areas in Europe



FLORENCE FADED

Since its golden period under Cosimo I and Lorenzo de' Medici, Florence had notably declined in spirit by the time the dynasty drew its final breath. "[The city] is much sunk from what it was, for they do not reckon there are above 50,000 souls in it," wrote one foreign visitor. By the time Gian Gastone succeeded his father, many Grand Tourists noted how the streets were packed mostly with either priests or peasants. Among the grand duke's first acts was to accommodate the poor with alms and workhouses, but this did little to solve the problem.

Harassed for decades by moralistic agents of the state, as well as impatient tax collectors, the entire population had become weary, paranoid and almost destitute during Cosimo III's tenure. "The declining state of this city is very visible," wrote another visitor, "It is not very populous; nor are the inhabitants useful, the clergy making up the bulk of the people… The sick and infirm must also be very numerous where there are so many aged persons."

After the death of the last Medici grand duke in 1737, Tuscany passed into the possession of Francis Stephen, duke of Lorraine. Tuscany and Florence was no longer a powerful, independent realm, but a mere branch of the Habsburg Empire – in time, Francis Stephen became not only archduke of Austria, but also Holy Roman Emperor. Before long, the Medici coat of arms was ripped from the fascias of Florence's buildings – an act symbolising the end of an era.

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FLORENCE AFTER THE MEDICI

With the Medici heading for extinction, the great powers of Europe vied to place their own candidates on the ducal throne

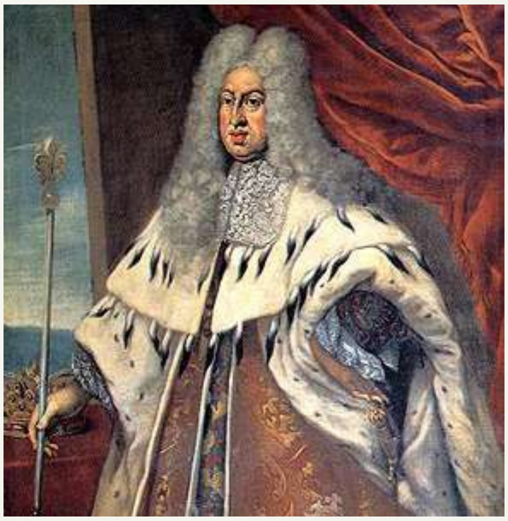
Words **Elizabeth Norton**

The dissolute Gian Gastone de' Medici, who succeeded his father as grand duke of Tuscany in 1723 was childless, with the question of the Tuscan succession a major European political issue at the time.

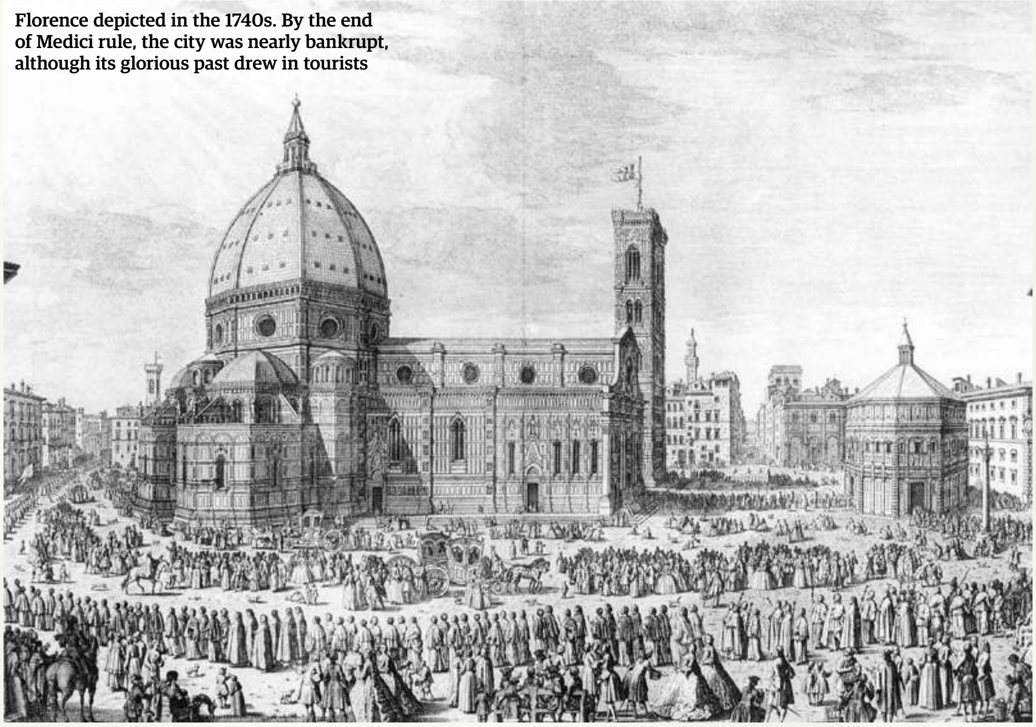
In spite of his confidence (as he put it) that "at the age of 61 I will father a beautiful son with no trouble at all," there was little likelihood of the alcoholic Gian Gastone producing an heir. This had the great powers of Europe lining up to inherit from him. Gian Gastone himself hoped that the grand duchy might be allowed to pass to the sons of the duke of Bavaria, into whose family he had married, but, in reality, his opinion was of little importance in the tangled international wrangling over his domains. There were a number of claimants to the Medici title, including the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, Philip V of Spain and members of the Italian House of Este.

Not long after Gian Gastone began his rule, Philip V of Spain and the Emperor Charles VI agreed that they would recognise Don Carlos of Spain as the heir to Tuscany, something that was opposed by the French. The matter dragged on until, in 1729, Philip V signed a treaty with France, Holland and Great Britain, with the powers agreeing to help enforce Don Carlos's succession to Tuscany. This caused a breach with the emperor, who had by then abandoned his support for Don Carlos. He brought troops into Italy and issued assurances to Gian Gastone that he would oppose the Spanish succession. It took a year for the question to be decided, with all the major European powers then recognising Don Carlos as Gian Gastone's heir.

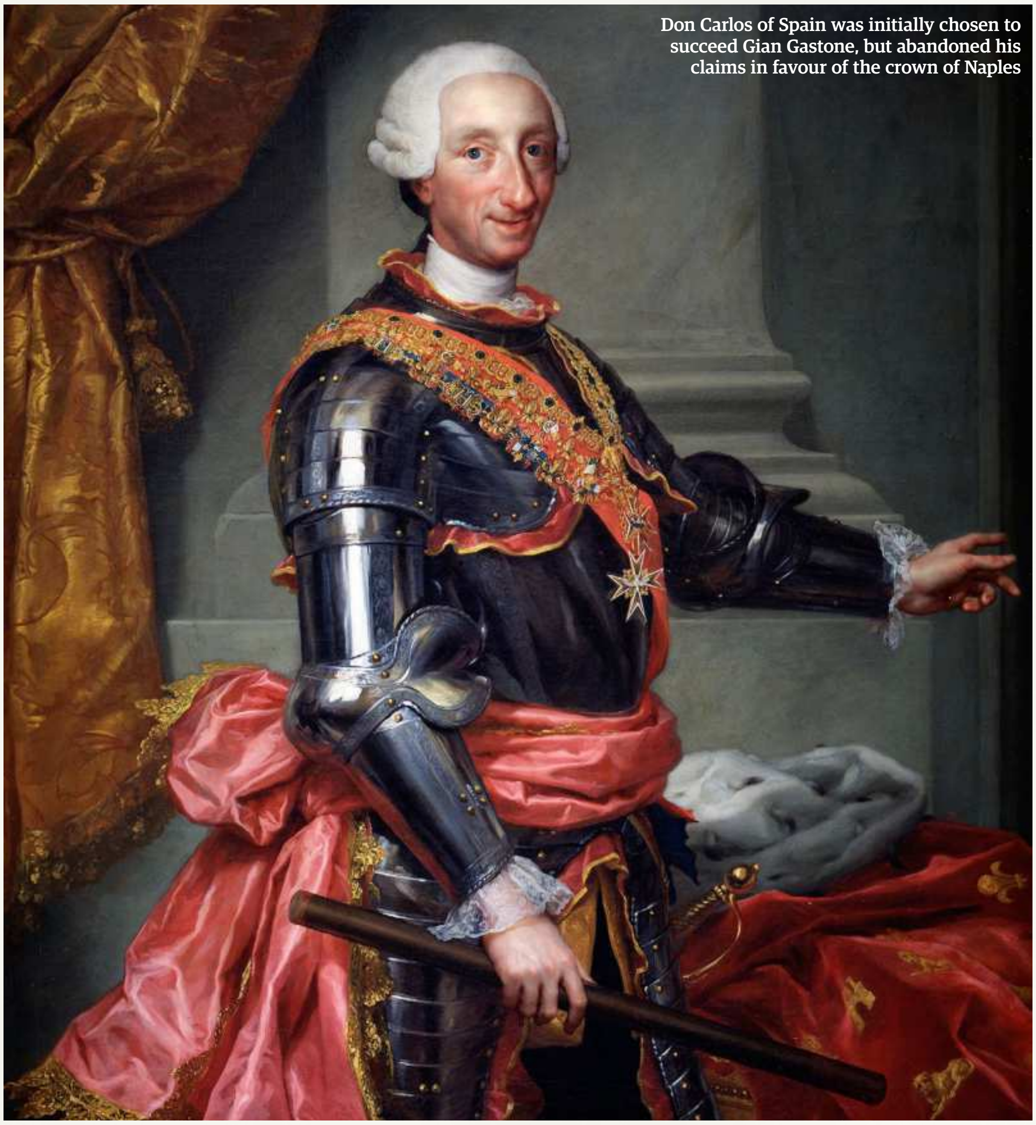
The 16-year-old Don Carlos came to Florence in 1731, spending seven months in the city, where he was entertained lavishly. As a younger son, he seemed to have little prospect of inheriting Spain and took an interest in his future capital, with the



The dissolute last Medici grand duke, Gian Gastone, was given no role in the determination of his successor



Florence depicted in the 1740s. By the end of Medici rule, the city was nearly bankrupt, although its glorious past drew in tourists



Don Carlos of Spain was initially chosen to succeed Gian Gastone, but abandoned his claims in favour of the crown of Naples

succession question appearing finally to be settled. However, in 1735 the young prince instead accepted the more desirable thrones of Naples and Sicily, leaving Tuscany once again without an heir.

With the loss of the Spanish candidate, Francis, Duke of Lorraine, who was married to Charles VI's daughter, the future Empress Maria Theresa, became the leading claimant. His claims were obscure, since he was descended only distantly from the Medici, through Marie de' Medici, wife of Henri IV of France, who was the ancestress of many of the royal houses of Europe. Francis was also considered something of a temporary solution, with the future claimant - who expected to inherit the imperial throne in due course - agreeing that he would then pass Tuscany onto another member of the imperial family.

However, he boldly asserted his claims, with his officials arriving in the city at the head of 6,000 troops when Gian Gastone died in 1737. Any claims to the succession of Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici, Gian Gastone's widowed sister, were ignored, although she was permitted to live in the Palazzo Pitti. She also willed the Medici family's entire wealth and property to the new grand duke and his successors, on the provision that it should always remain within Tuscany.

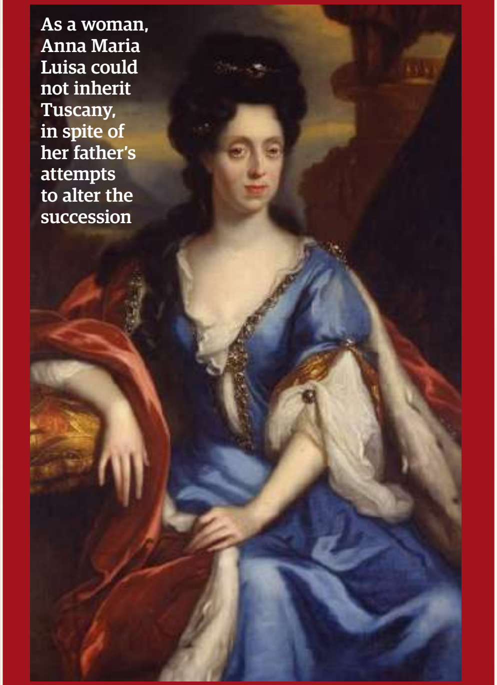
The end of three centuries of Medici rule in Tuscany was met with bells tolling across Florence and genuine concern for the future. Although Francis of Lorraine claimed to rule by hereditary right, to the citizens of Tuscany his arrival looked like a military occupation. Francis immediately ordered the removal of the Medici balls from public buildings in the city, replacing them with Austrian eagles and the cross of Lorraine. He banned, too, any holidays associated with the Medici dynasty, to the citizens' chagrin. While the last Medici grand dukes had been unpopular, the Lorraines were despised, with most citizens looking back on their former masters wistfully.

Florence in the mid-18th century was, in any event, a sad shadow of its great past. It was almost bankrupt, with the city full of beggars and the buildings neglected and crumbling. It was crammed, too, with monks and friars, who ministered to an increasingly small population. The citizens were sullen towards their new masters, with Francis of Lorraine, who finally arrived in January 1739, receiving only a muted welcome. He was, however, at least feted with fireworks and processions when he made his formal entry.

Francis and his wife, Maria Theresa, spent three months in the city, staying at the Palazzo Pitti, which they used as a base from which to explore their city. They gave masked balls, too, at the Palazzo Vecchio, while they also attended a football game in the city. They appeared to enjoy their visit, but in spite of promises to return they remained absent, with Florence ruled by regents for the next 27 years. During this time, much of the artwork and the remaining wealth of the city was removed to Vienna. Taxation increased too, with bankruptcies rising in the city. Francis of Lorraine was not

THE LAST MEDICI

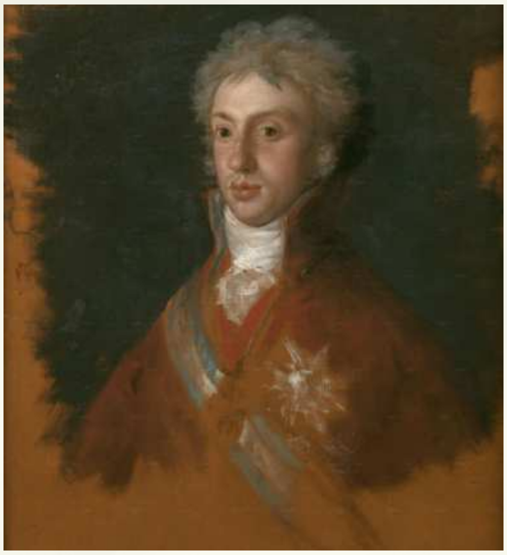
Anna Maria Luisa, who was the last Medici, lived in Florence after the death of the final Medici grand duke

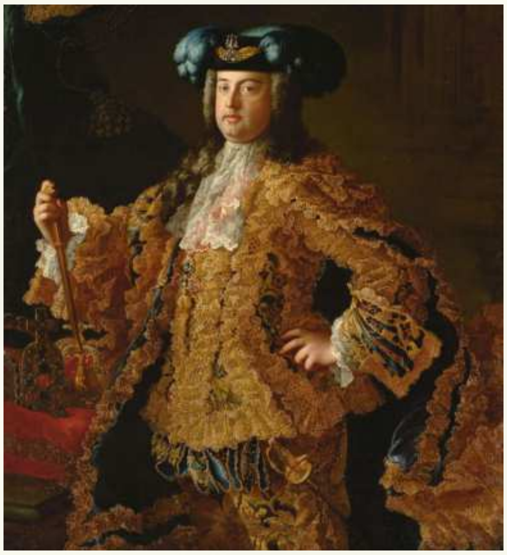

As a woman, Anna Maria Luisa could not inherit Tuscany, in spite of her father's attempts to alter the succession

Although the final Medici grand duke died in 1737, he was not the last member of the family to live in Florence. Grand Duke Gian Gastone's sister, Anna Maria Luisa was a great favourite of her father, Cosimo III, who hoped that she could succeed him.

Only male succession was permitted to the grand duchy, with Cosimo III therefore attempting to persuade the European powers to allow his daughter to inherit. In 1710 he proposed that Anna Maria Luisa should inherit after her brother's death, with Tuscany to then become a republic after her own death. This suggestion was not welcomed favourably, with Cosimo instead issuing an edict in 1713, which named Anna Maria Luisa as the next heir after his son, Gian Gastone. This was ignored by the Holy Roman Emperor and other European powers, who favoured the accession of Don Carlos of Spain.

Anna Maria Luisa had married the elector palatine in 1691 and moved to Germany. She finally returned to Florence in 1716 as a childless and wealthy widow and became influential in Florentine politics. After her father's death in 1723, Anna Maria Luisa's brother took steps to exclude her from government. Faced by opposition to her succession from all the powers of Europe, the last Medici was unable to secure the grand duchy for herself. She lived out her days as a wealthy widow in Florence, bequeathing the last of the Medici treasures to the new Lorraine grand dukes on the proviso that her collection never left Florence.


Louis of Parma arrived in Florence in 1801 to rule the new kingdom of Etruria, backed by French troops

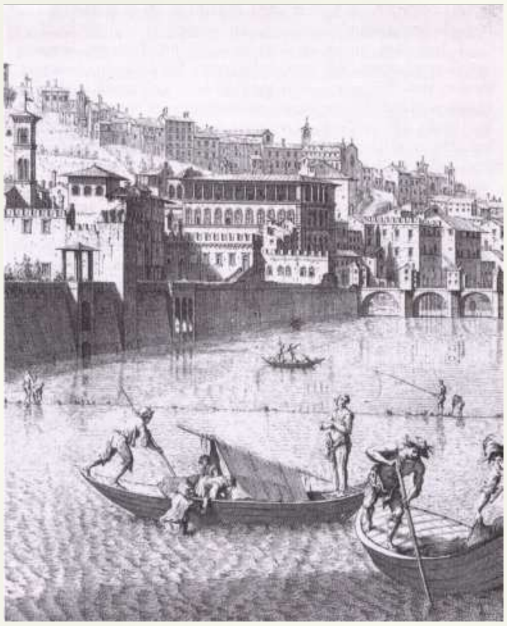

Francis of Lorraine was eventually selected as Gian Gastone's successor, but he was an unpopular ruler

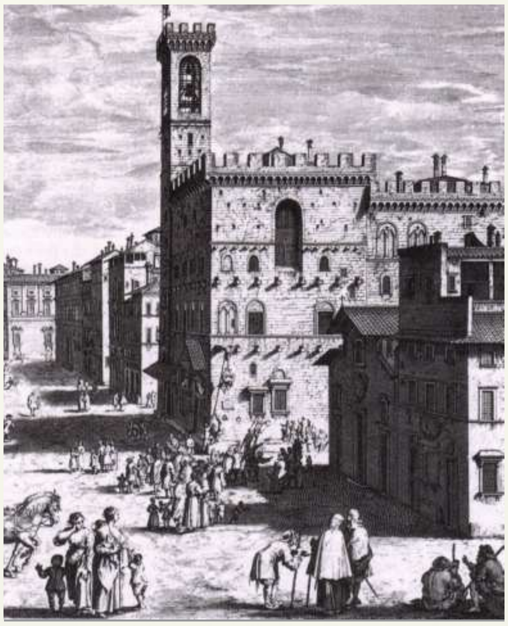
mourned in Tuscany when he died suddenly in 1765, being succeeded by his son, Peter Leopold. As a younger son, Peter Leopold was prepared, along with his wife, Maria Luisa of Spain, to live in his grand duchy.

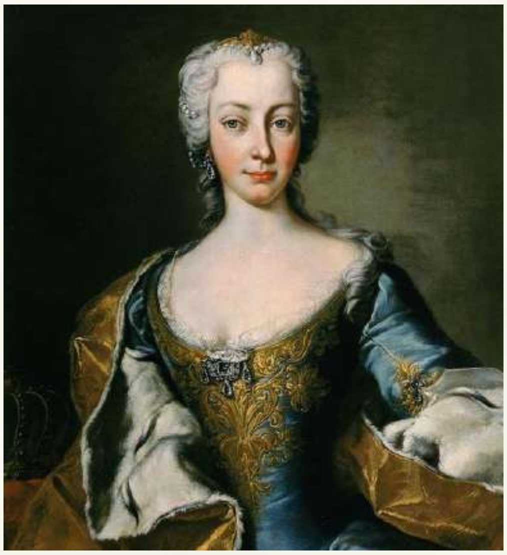
Peter Leopold was determined to distance himself from his Austrian connections, assuring his new subjects that he meant to govern in the best interests of Tuscany. Although this resolve was soon tested when he was forced by his elder brother to contribute towards Austria's expenses in the Seven Years' War, he pleased his new subjects by speaking Italian both in public and private and by naming his son Giovanni, after Florence's patron saint.

Peter Leopold also focused his energies on improving agriculture in his grand duchy, while he founded schools for poor children in Florence and abolished torture and execution in his domains. He was determined to change every aspect of life

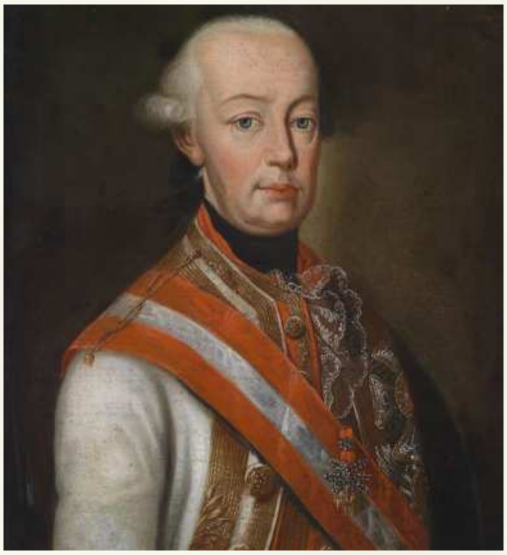
> "FRANCIS OF LORRAINE WAS NOT MOURNED IN TUSCANY WHEN HE DIED SUDDENLY IN 1765"


Mid-18th-century Florence was a leading stop on the Grand Tours of young Northern European gentlemen

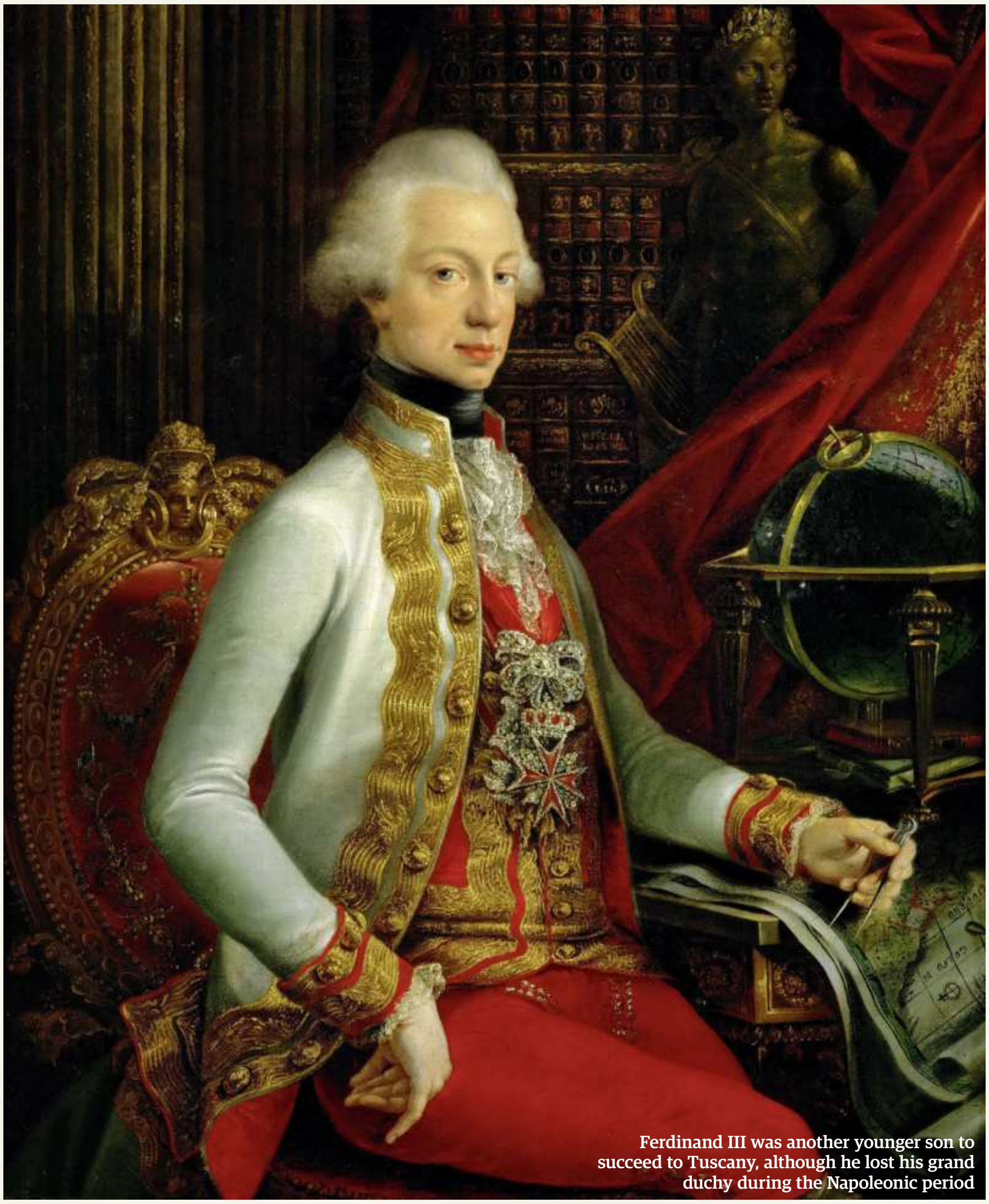

A view of Florence from 1744. When Francis of Lorraine arrived, the city was filled with beggars and poverty



Francis's wife, the famous Empress Maria Theresa, visited Florence, but preferred her Austrian homeland



Peter Leopold, depicted around the time that he became the imperial ruler, ending his rule in Tuscany



Ferdinand III was another younger son to succeed to Tuscany, although he lost his grand duchy during the Napoleonic period

in Tuscany, including taking an interest in public health, the Church and in reorganising the city's archives. He also supported the arts and literature, supporting the publication of Riguccio Galluzzi's *History of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany Under the House of Medici*, for example.

His reign still saw considerable unrest, with workers faced with low wages and often poor living conditions. His personal rule, too, came to an abrupt end on 20 February 1790 when his brother, Emperor Joseph II, died. After accepting the imperial throne as Leopold II, Peter Leopold and his family immediately moved to Vienna. Although he left a regency council behind, they were soon faced with extensive rioting.

In June 1791 Peter Leopold's second son became Grand Duke Ferdinand III. He, like his father, promised to be a hands-on ruler, although his reign was interrupted in 1801 when Napoleon Bonaparte incorporated Tuscany into the newly created Kingdom of Etruria, over which Louis of Parma was appointed to rule. This short-lived kingdom was soon replaced with a new grand duchy of Tuscany, this time ruled by Napoleon's sister, Elisa, and her husband, only for Ferdinand III to return in 1814. The end of French occupation was greeted with rejoicing in Florence, while the Lorraine dynasty ruled for a few more generations before Tuscany was finally incorporated into a newly unified Italy in the late 19th century.

While Francis of Lorraine and his heirs ruled over an impoverished grand duchy, they also presided over a city still considered to be steeped in culture. Florence had always drawn some visitors under the Medici, but in the mid-18th century it became renowned as a tourist destination, with visitors spending time in the city on their Grand Tours. This led to a growth in infrastructure in the city, with new inns built and others enlarged to house the visitors during their stays. The city was particularly popular with young men from England and Scotland, who came to see the sights, as well as to enjoy the lively culture of the city and purchase fine artworks, furniture and other luxuries to take back home. Although the Napoleonic Wars led to a dramatic decline in visitor numbers, tourists soon returned, with the city always remaining one of Europe's leading tourist destinations.

Medici rule in Florence, while often troubled and unpopular, was also cultured, with great innovations in the arts and science marking the family's time in power. Their vast collection of artworks, books and jewels ensured that the economic recovery of the city has left it one of the most cultured cities in the world. Many millions of tourists have come to see its treasures since the 18th century until the present day, with the Medici collection at the very heart of the city's tourist trade. The buildings, too, in which they lived, worked and worshipped are admired and visited, with Florence easily able to lay claim to being the most significant cultural capital of Europe. This is the legacy of the Medici.

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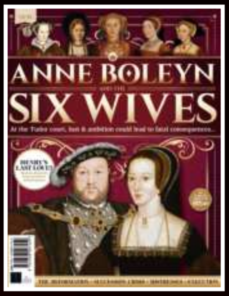

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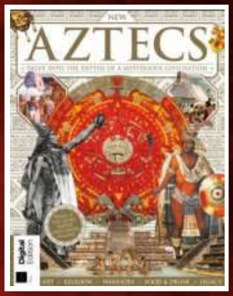

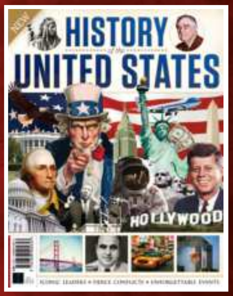

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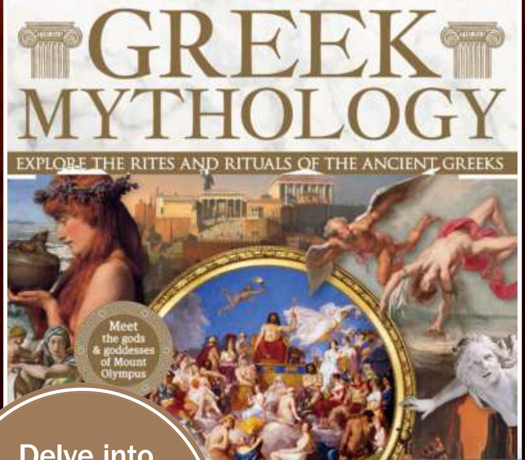
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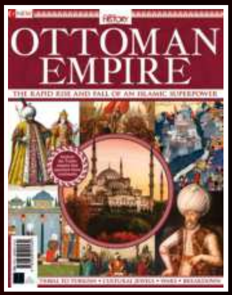
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